

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 12

Immortal Destiny

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: The Emperor's Decree

“My imperial Xiamang clan is the successor to and has the bloodline of the imperial ‘Xia clan’ of the Primordial World of Pangu. We long ago unified this major world and have cultivated it for countless years. I then apprenticed myself to Master, who once said...in terms of strength of karmic luck, the major world of the Grand Xia Dynasty ranks as number one amongst the tens of major worlds under his control. With so much karmic luck present here, the upcoming tremors that are going to give birth to some peerless heroes will very likely give birth to them right here, in the world of the Grand Xia!” The black-robed Emperor was pondering this matter.

“Master is someone who mastered a Heavenly Dao. Even in the Three Realms, he is one of the most absolutely supreme of major powers...but even he is worried about the major storm that is going to sweep the Three Realms...if I am careless, the imperial clan of the Grand Xia might be wiped out.”

He knew very well that his master was one of the truly supreme powers of the Three Realms, with tens of major worlds that completely obeyed his orders. The Grand Xia’s world was just one of them.

As for the Celestial Emperor?

The Celestial Emperor was nothing more than a person who was in charge of administrating and managing some of the rules of the Three Realms. In terms of power and authority, the Celestial Emperor wasn’t that much higher than the Grand Xia Emperor, much less his master. Only individuals on the level of his master were hegemons who truly governed the destiny of the Three Realms. In the past, when there had been some disturbances in the Three Realms, quite a few Celestial Emperors had been appointed. Who would be the Celestial Emperor? This was something that would be decided by the supreme experts on his master’s level.

“If even someone like Master is worried, then his disciples, such as

myself, have a very high chance of falling. I must be absolutely cautious, as careful as I can."

The black-robed Emperor had lived from the era of the Primordial World until this era; in the past, he had led his tribe from the Primordial World and relocated to this world, later known as the world of the 'Grand Xia Dynasty'. He had battled against the local Fiendgods and the other tribes before finally unifying the world. He wasn't an easy person to deal with!

He knew exactly what needed to do in order to survive a major cataclysm.

"I need to befriend even more experts of the Three Realms. It would be ideal if some of them were willing to put themselves under my command. My luck would improve significantly if they did."

"During this Conclave of Immortal Destiny, I imagine that future experts of the Three Realms will be born."

The black-robed Emperor's eyes were hooded.

Suddenly...from afar, a figure appeared atop the clouds. This man was dressed in long yellow robes that were embroidered with the image of a Raindragon. His face was round, with soft lines, but his eyes were like the stars themselves. He...was King Qi! A Celestial Immortal!

"I bow before you, your Imperial Majesty," King Qi said, bowing respectfully.

"King Qi, have any major matters occurred during this period of time when I was gone?" The black-robed Emperor asked. Normally, it was the Emperor's clansmen and senior officials who managed the major affairs of the empire; only the truly major matters would be reported to the Emperor.

"Your Imperial Majesty, you already know that King Yan has become a Celestial Immortal. As for other matters...nothing major has occurred. Everything in the Grand Xia Dynasty is rather peaceful," King Qi said respectfully. The death of Youngflame Nong? Forget about the next

Godplume Duke; even if the current Godplume Duke died, it would be a petty, minor matter that was not worth mentioning to the Emperor.

But of course, if a Celestial Immortal like Patriarch Arcanum perished, it would be worth reporting.

“Mm.” The black-robed Emperor nodded. “There are a few months left before the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. Have you heard any unusual news regarding this Conclave?”

“The Conclave?” King Qi was startled.

The Conclave of Immortal Destiny was carried out every three centuries. For short-lived Immortal cultivators, this was something that happened only once in a lifetime, but for someone as exalted as the Grand Xia Emperor...the Emperor had lived for so incomparably long that for him, the tricentennial Conclave was quite a ordinary, regular event. He might spend ten thousand years in a single closed-door meditation session; he normally wouldn't pay any attention to the Conclave. It would be his subordinates, the Celestial Immortals, who would spend a bit of time on it.

For Celestial Immortals to officiate over it was already putting it on a very high pedestal.

“If I must point out something unusual regarding this Conclave of Immortal Destiny...” King Qi pondered for a moment as he thought about an intelligence report that had been delivered to him by the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, then said, “I suppose there is something. In past Conclaves, some of the truly proud and peerless geniuses would disdain from attending...but all of the extremely famous peerless geniuses are attending this time. In terms of quality, the competitors in this Conclave should be exceptionally high.”

Peerless geniuses wouldn't necessarily take part in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. Because of their own personality, characters, and training techniques, quite a few would not attend. For example, the Sloppy Daoist had originally not been planning to attend at all.

“Oh?” The black-robed Emperor nodded lightly. Indeed; the signs were

all there. Luck, the invisible intrinsic, was beginning to gather.

This Conclave of Immortal Destiny was going to be one of the places where karmic luck would gather. Those peerless geniuses would innately be drawn to attend, because the most outstanding of them would gain the blessing of even more luck, allowing their future potential to be limitless.

“I shall personally host this Conclave of Immortal Destiny,” the black-robed Emperor said.

“Persona–” King Qi said, astonished, “The Conclave happens every three centuries; it isn’t that important. Your Imperial Majesty, you are going to personally host it?

The black-robed Emperor nodded. “Yes. I shall personally host it, and I am going to increase the rewards for this Conclave a hundredfold as well.”

“A hundredfold?” King Qi’s heart shook. In the past, only the top three competitors of the Conclave would be bestowed an Immortal-ranked magic treasure. Then this time...?

“Spread my command to the various marquises and the major schools and sects of the world,” the black-robed Emperor said calmly. “Tell them that I am paying close attention to this Conclave, and that I will personally officiate over it. Have the various marquises, schools, and sects all arrange for their most supremely talented disciples to attend this Conclave.”

“Command?” King Qi was even more speechless. The question of participation was generally a matter of personal choice.

“King Qi, you should know about the major upheavals that occurred in the Netherworld Kingdom a few decades ago, yes?” The black-robed Emperor looked at King Qi.

“I do. Of course I know about the collapse of the Six Paths of Reincarnation. But what does this have to do with the Conclave of Immortal Destiny...?” King Qi had some vague premonitions, but because his vision was limited to this major world, he didn’t truly understand. In

his heart, however, he understood that most likely it was the prior upheavals in the Netherworld Kingdom which caused the Emperor to pay such attention to this Conclave.

If that was the case, then he definitely could not be negligent.

"I'll send your commands right away," King Qi immediately said.

"Good. Arrange for the opening ceremony of the Conclave to be on the sixteenth of the first lunar month," the black-robed Emperor ordered.

"Yes," King Qi acknowledged.

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Soon, the news that his Imperial Majesty the Grand Xia Emperor was going to personally host this Conclave of Immortal Destiny and was ordering the various marquisates, schools, and sects to arrange for their most elite of disciples to participate quickly spread from the imperial capital to the entirety of this major world. The countless marquises of this vast world, as well as the major powers located in the boundless seas, all received the Emperor's commands!

"The Emperor is going to personally officiate?"

"The last time the Emperor officiated a Conclave of Immortal Destiny was back when the revolting Dong'e clan and the other clans were annihilated. That was already countless years ago...and the only time that he officiated before that was the during the very first Conclave. Why is the Emperor going to host the Conclave of Immortal Destiny this time?"

All of the marquises, major schools, and major sects were all uneasy. They weren't worried about the deaths of their Wanxiang Disciples; even if all of them perished, that would simply mean that there would be a gap at a certain level of experts for a few centuries, after which new geniuses would have arisen.

What they were worried about was what the Emperor was planning. This was the Emperor who controlled the destiny of this entire major world! He was going to personally officiate, and had send commands to them...the hidden meaning behind this was extraordinary.

“Patriarch, it was the Emperor who officiated over the very first Conclave of Immortal Destiny; he also officiated the Conclave that occurred after the revolting Dong'e clan was wiped out. This will be only the third time the Emperor is personally hosting the Conclave...there must be a reason behind it.”

“Enough. Don’t trouble yourself about it. How can someone like you possibly comprehend the thoughts of someone as exalted as his Imperial Majesty? Even if he ordered all of the younger geniuses in our clan to go die, we would still obey. Arrange for the top three Wanxiang Disciples of the younger generation in our clan to go attend this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. As for the others...let them do as they please.”

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“Summon the three Sacred Childs. They are to prepare to join the Conclave of Immortal Destiny.”

“Yes, Sacred Master.”

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“The five highest ranked disciples of our school, Heaven’s Equal, are all required to participate in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. As for the others, they can do as they please.”

“Yes, Supreme One.”

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Not a single one of the many powerful forces of the world of the Grand Xia dared to disobey. Those who received the orders were all at least on the level of the Northmont clan of Stillwater. As for the likes of the Black-White College? They weren’t even qualified to receive these orders.

Another winter had arrived. The sun shone down on the accumulated snow, making it gleam brightly.

Ji Ning, Yuchi Xiyue, Yu Wei, Mu Northson, Adept Vastriver, and the Sloppy Daoist were all together, drinking Immortal nectar, eating seafood, and chatting casually.

“The order has already come down from within the imperial citadel,” Xiyue said with a laugh. “The date of this Conclave has been set down as the sixteenth of the first lunar month. A little more than a month remains now.”

Every single Conclave was hosted during the first lunar month.

“I was wandering the imperial capital the other day, and when I was eating, I heard people next to me chatting. They said that three of the nine top-ranked disciples of their school had arrived, and that various other figures from other schools had arrived as well. It seems as though very many geniuses are participating this time.” Northson, holding a beasthead goblet of wine, spoke quite excitedly.

“From the intelligence reports I purchased from the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, I can see that one batch after another of geniuses are gathering here at the imperial capital,” Yu Wei said solemnly.

Xiyue said with a laugh, “It seems as though you don’t know enough of the inner details; in reality, it will be his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor himself, who will personally officiate over this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. The various schools, sects, and marquisates are all naturally sending their most talented geniuses over, in the hopes of ingratiating themselves with his Imperial Majesty.”

“His Imperial Majesty is personally officiating?” Ning, Yu Wei, and the Sloppy Daoist were all surprised.

“Actually, all of the marquisates know about this matter, and I imagine some of the peerless geniuses of the various schools know as well. However, they don’t dare to casually discuss this with others,” Xiyue said. “I’m letting you know now, but don’t let others know.”

“Of course.”

Ning and the others were still in a state of shock. The Grand Xia Emperor? The person who unified this entire major world? Someone who stood at the true peak of this land?

Ning and the others couldn’t help but feel even more eager now.

As time flowed out, more and more geniuses arrived at the imperial capital of the Grand Xia. In fact, there were some people who originally hadn't planned to come, but decided to hurry over specifically because they heard that a truly staggering number of geniuses was attending this Conclave.

Time passed in the blink of an eye...and it was now the sixteenth day of the first lunar month.

Chapter 2: The World-Guarding Formation

The day was just beginning. The Wanxiang Adepts who were scattered in residences throughout the imperial capital, as well as the 3600 marquises and their entourages, were all floating towards the imperial citadel.

“So many people.” Ji Ning, Yu Wei, and the Sloppy Daoist were currently flying together shoulder-to-shoulder on a cloud towards the imperial capital.

“Junior apprentice-brother, where are the others?” The Sloppy Daoist seemed to have just woken up. He asked, puzzled, “Why haven’t junior apprentice-brother Vastriver and the others shown up?”

Ning laughed, “Junior apprentice-brother Northson and senior apprentice-brother Vastriver have gone to go join with the main delegation from Stillwater Commandery. His Imperial Majesty is personally officiating over this Conclave, and delegations have come from all 3600 commanderies to pay their respects to his Imperial Majesty. They have to be alongside the Stillwater delegation; otherwise, they won’t even be able to enter the imperial citadel.”

“Oh.” The Sloppy Daoist nodded, now understanding. “I thought anyone who wanted to go watch could just go in and watch.”

“Senior apprentice-brother, all you ever do is train. You should at least read some of the intelligence reports,” Yu Wei said helplessly. “How can just anyone come and watch the Conclave of Immortal Destiny? Do you think the imperial citadel is just a place anyone can enter?”

“Well, I’m always in closed-door training, so...” the Sloppy Daoist scratched his head, grinning.

Ning explained, “There are three types of people who are entering the imperial citadel today. The first type consists of Wanxiang Adepts like us; because we are going to risk our lives in battle, we can just go in directly. The second type consists of the delegations that are led by the various marquises who are going to go pay their respects to his Imperial Majesty.

The third type consists of the likes of Celestial Immortals, such as King Yan, who can take Princess Xiyue directly into the citadel. As for others? There might be some exceptional, powerful figures who can enter the citadel, but I wouldn't know anything about that."

The Sloppy Daoist nodded in understanding.

Right at this moment, as they were speaking, Ning's group had flown through the clouds and arrived at a large street. In the distance, they could see those four massive Fiendgods that were thirty thousand meters tall who were guarding the gates to the imperial citadel.

Whoooooosh. One squad after another of Immortal cultivators flew past, either in groups of two or three, or in giant delegations. All of them were flying towards the imperial citadel.

However, the gates to the imperial citadel remained shut.

Soon, Ning's group arrived as well, and they landed.

"So many people." The Sloppy Daoist looked around at his surroundings. A vast, tightly packed cluster of more than a hundred thousand individuals had already gathered outside the imperial citadel. Some were here to participate in the Conclave, but most were here to spectate. A steady, unbroken stream of Immortal cultivators continued to descend from the heavens.

"We might as well wait patiently. When the nine gongs ring out, the citadel gates will open," Ning said.

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They waited for nearly two hours. The Golden Crow had already risen high into the sky, and the light of the sun shone down upon the entire imperial capital.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

Nine consecutive gongs rang out. The sound was melodious, seeming to come down from the Nine Heavens, causing the million-plus individuals who had gathered outside the imperial citadel to all quiet down.

RUUUMBLE!

The tall gates of the imperial citadel suddenly swung open. The four massive Fiendgods stared down at the million-plus humans. One of them, a fire-spewing, fire-skinned Fiendgod, spoke out: "Wanxiang Adepts who wish to participate in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, you can now enter the imperial capital. If you enter, then you must participate in the Conclave; there will be no chance to change your mind. You may now enter!"

Instantly, with a series of whooshes, a vast locust swarm of figures all began to fly towards the imperial citadel's gates, blocking out the skies as they did so.

"How many people is this?!" The Sloppy Daoist's eyes were completely round.

"Normally, each Conclave of Immortal Destiny will generally have twenty or thirty thousand competitors," Ning said with a laugh. "In this Conclave...since his Imperial Majesty is personally hosting it, this Conclave is extraordinarily special, and I estimate that there should be roughly a hundred thousand or so." Much of this information had come to Ning via his cousin.

"On average, each commandery has sent thirty individuals?" The Sloppy Daoist pondered on this. "It seems as though 99% of the formidable elites of the world have all come."

"This Conclave of Immortal Destiny is different from normal ones," Yu Wei said.

As they flew into the imperial capital, they saw a wide, spacious thoroughfare.

"Those who shall participate in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, follow me!" A deep, booming voice shook the heavens. Up ahead, a squad of Imperial Guards had appeared in midair, and they were guiding the way.

They followed the wide thoroughfare and quickly arrived at an

incomparably vast plaza. This plaza was so large that one couldn't see to the end of it with the naked eye alone. It was paved with pitch-black stones, and the pavestones were all covered with incomparably complicated runes. The runes covered the entire plaza, causing it to emanate a terrifying, heart-freezing aura.

"Those who shall participate in the Conclave are all to wait in this region," the Imperial Guards up ahead instructed.

Almost none of these geniuses and talents from around the world had ever been in the imperial capital. They were all rather awestruck, and they behaved obediently, all moving towards the designated region.

Whoosh!

The Imperial Guards quickly split apart, forming a perimeter that completely surrounded the region. They stood there with blank faces, not moving at all. These Imperial Guards also knew that today, his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor, was going to be personally hosting the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. It was rare for Imperial Guards like them to encounter his Imperial Majesty; how could they not be extremely earnest and serious today?

"I imagine that this plaza is at least ten thousand kilometers wide." The chubby Sloppy Daoist lowered his heads, inspecting the runes. "And it contains an extremely terrifying formation, one that vastly surpasses any I have ever sensed."

"Right." Yu Wei had a solemn look on her face as well as she carefully inspected the plaza.

The voice of the giant yellow bear rang out in Ning's mind. "It seems as though the roots of this Grand Xia Dynasty of yours are actually quite deep. Based on what I can tell from the runic formations covering this plaza...it should be a single formation-diagram! This formation-diagram was formed from the linkage of more than three Pure Yang magic treasures, and more than a thousand Immortal-ranked magic treasures. With but a thought, the Grand Xia Emperor could probably activate this titanic formation, formed from all those treasures. A formation formed

from so many treasures...it should be a vast formation designed to safeguard his headquarters, and also to safeguard this entire major world of yours. Formidable, formidable. Incredible! I imagine that even most Pure Yang True Immortals are unable to lay such a grand formation; the person who laid out this world-guarding formation is absolutely one of the truly top powers of the Three Realms, most likely on par with Master himself!"

"What?!" Ning was shocked. Comparable with Daoist Threelives? A formation which even most Pure Yang True Immortals would not be able to establish? A world-guarding formation? Meant to protect this entire major world?

What Ning didn't know...was that the guess of the spirit of the underwater estate was absolutely correct. Although this ancient world-guarding formation hadn't been established by the master of the Grand Xia Emperor, and had instead been set up by another major power who was equivalent to him in power...it was indeed meant to protect this entire major world, and the headquarters of the Grand Xia Dynasty.

"If the Emperor of your Grand Xia is a Pure Yang True Immortal...with a formation like this at his back, there are extremely few figures in the entirety of the Three Realms who can do anything to him at all. The major powers who are capable of acting against him, upon seeing the world-guarding formation, would probably give face to the major power who set up the formation and stay their hands." The giant yellow bear said. "Formidable, formidable! The background of your Grand Xia Emperor is truly exceptional. He lives up to his reputation as someone capable of controlling an entire major world."

The spirit of the underwater estate was tremendously experienced; at a single glance, he could tell how extraordinary the Grand Xia Emperor's background was.

"Then would his Imperial Majesty be able to discover your presence?" Ning asked.

"Don't worry at all. Even the supreme major power who set up this

formation would at most notice something unique about the underwater estate, but they can forget about trying to spy inside it. This is, after all, the treasure which Master poured all of his efforts into as his legacy.” The giant yellow bear was extremely confident.

Ning nodded.

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Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

Ning and all of the other Wanxiang Adept participants of the Conclave all turned to look. One delegation after another, in absolute perfect formation, came flying over. They came over methodically, clearly understanding quite a bit about the rules of propriety. By contrast, Ning and the other geniuses had all flown in like a horde of locusts.

“3600 commanderies, and the four seas...” Ning could immediately tell that all of these delegations were split up by commanderies. The delegations all flew in, then settled down onto the plaza.

“Stillwater Commandery.” Yu Wei pointed towards the distance. Ning and the Sloppy Daoist both looked over.

The Stillwater delegation was led by a tall, skinny, black-robed man. His aura was heroic and majestic, and his bearing was extraordinary as well. It was the Marquis of Stillwater. Behind him was a group of Northmont clansmen. Amongst them, Ning noticed Northmont Baiwei, who was obediently following within the crowd. Behind them were ten-plus individuals from the Black-White College, as well as representatives from the Dragonhunter clan, the Bluewood clan, and the other major clans of Stillwater Commandery. The entire Stillwater delegation consisted of at least hundreds of individuals.

The delegations from the 3600 commanderies and the four seas all landed in perfect unison.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

One figure after another now began to soar in through the skies.

“Cousin.” Ning could see that the figures who were flying through the skies included King Yan, who had led Xiyue directly into the skies and through the clouds.

“Is that junior apprentice-sister Ninelotus?!” The Sloppy Daoist called out in surprise.

Ning saw her as well.

Ninelotus was currently flying through the skies alongside a blue-robed man. Ning had heard his cousin speak of this as well...only Celestial Immortals were allowed to fly directly into the main hall of the Skylight Palace and go see the Grand Xia Emperor. The others actually wouldn't even have a chance to see him at all. Celestial Immortals were permitted to bring two followers with them, and so the blue-robed man should be a Celestial Immortal.

As Ning lifted his head, Ninelotus looked downwards with a searching gaze as well. Suddenly, their gazes intersected.

A familiar yet strange feeling resonated between their hearts.

Both of them couldn't help but look away.

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The highest point of the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

The Grand Xia Emperor, dressed in black robes, was seated on high atop his throne. The individuals below him were divided into two columns, all standing. Those standing closest to the Grand Xia Emperor were naturally the Celestial Immortals and Kings of the Xiamang clan, while those towards the rear consisted of the Celestial Immortals from other parts of the Grand Xia Empire. Although technically speaking, there had been no order for the Celestial Immortals to all attend as well, many of them were quite keen and sharp; they, too, sensed that there was something strange with the fact that the Grand Xia Emperor was going to personally officiate over this Conclave, and so quite a few of them had hurried over as well.

At a glance, one could see nearly a thousand Celestial Immortals who

stood there before the Emperor.

“We bow in respect to you, your Imperial Majesty.”

King Qi led the first respectful salute. Instantly, all the other Celestial Immortals bowed as well. As for the followers who had accompanied the Celestial Immortals, they all fell to their knees.

In this moment...

Every single individual present on the vast plaza located far below the Skylight Palace, be it the hundred thousand-plus geniuses who were participating in the Conclave or the million-plus members of the delegations from the 3600 commanderies and four seas...they all knelt down in unison, kowtowing and pressing their foreheads against the ground. In unison, they called out:

“WE BOW IN RESPECT TO YOU, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY!”

The sound echoed like thunder, shaking the entire world.

“ARISE!” The voice of the Grand Xia Emperor shook the world as well.

Chapter 3: The Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers

The black-robed Emperor, seated at the highest point of the main hall of the Skylight Palace, spoke out. “King Qi.”

“Your Imperial Majesty,” King Qi immediately acknowledged.

“Announce the rules for this Conclave,” the black-robed Emperor instructed.

“Yes.”

King Qi immediately flew out of the main hall. He stood atop a cloud, staring downwards as his voice echoed out within the heavens. “This Conclave of Immortal Destiny has a total of 109,362 participants!”

His voice rang out clearly, echoing in skies. More than nine thousand kilometers below him, the Wanxiang Adepts of the Grand Xia Empire as well as other major worlds all listened carefully.

“More than 109,000?” Ning’s eyebrows twitched. Although he could clearly calculate the number of people present through a simple sweep of his divine sense...this was the imperial citadel, and the Grand Xia Empire was seated directly above them. No one dared to wildly spread out their divine sense to investigate the place.

The voice above them continued to speak. “Wanxiang Adepts, each of you shall receive a talisman. All of you shall enter the magic treasure which his Imperial Majesty shall use; the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers! This painting is capable of holding the cosmos, of holding qian and kun; it forms an independent world of its own. Within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, you can battle each other and seize each other’s talismans without any restrictions. If you feel that you are not strong enough, you can discard your talisman, which will cause you to immediately be teleported out from the Diagram. Although this will represent defeat, you will at least be able to stay alive.”

“Those who choose to give up...”

“Those who are killed...”

“Your talismans will be taken away by the victor of your battle. The length of time you are to remain within the Diagram is at most one year; after a year, the eighty competitors with the most talismans will have passed the trial of the Diagram. If, however, before the year is up...if, for example, after three months, only eighty of you are still alive...then the trial of the Diagram will be stopped early, and the eighty lucky survivors will have passed.”

“If after a year has passed and eighty victors are selected, but other Wanxiang Adepts remain alive within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, then the remaining survivors will be put together in one place and engage in a final battle. You shall fight until only sixteen of you remain. Those sixteen will receive chances as well.”

“In other words, the trial of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountain and Seas will have at least eighty victors, and at most ninety six.”

“Remember – within the Diagram, you are forbidden from using any Dao-seals, golems, or strange treasures! This trial is meant to test your personal ability. All of your actions within the Diagram shall be under the gaze of his Imperial Majesty, as well as the gazes of the Celestial Immortals present. You absolutely cannot act improperly; those who disobey shall be slain without exception!”

Slain without exception!

These final three words caused the hearts of all of the competitors to quiver.

“At least eighty? At most ninety six?” Ning, Yu Wei, and the Sloppy Daoist exchanged glances. They all could sense how bloody the upcoming battles would be.

This was absolutely insane.

All of these hundred thousand-plus individuals were peerless geniuses who were at least at Holyfire’s level! A hundred thousand-plus peerless geniuses, many of whom would most likely have a high chance of

becoming Earth Immortals or Loose Immortals...but because of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, they had to engage in a bloody battle against each other. Although it was said that one could give up, in the heat of a battle, it was very likely that many would end up perishing.

“At most ninety six...and the world has 3600 commanderies, as well as four vast seas. On average, there will only be a single victor for every few dozen commanderies.” The Sloppy Daoist let out a sigh. “This is crazy.”

“I wonder if the three of us will be able to overcome this trial.” Yu Wei’s gaze was much more solemn now as well.

Ning, too, felt the pressure.

In the past, the Conclave had generally not been this bloody; in the past, there were usually only twenty or thirty thousand Wanxiang Adepts, all of whom would go through several rounds of selection, resulting in the top hundred, then top fifty, then slowly a top ten and top three.

But this time, more than a hundred thousand of them were going to be sent directly into the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, with this competition intended to produce between eighty to ninety six victors.

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

King Qi walked back, bowing respectfully. “Reporting to your Imperial Majesty: The proclamation has been made.”

“Mm.” The black-robed Emperor nodded lightly. His gaze pierced past the blocking hall and clouds, landing upon the bodies of the hundred thousand-plus youths. He wanted to watch...watch and see which of them would rise up to become truly powerful figures within this upcoming storm for the Three Realms.

“There are more than a hundred who are surrounded by the golden light of karmic virtue.” The black-robed Emperor reflected silently on this. “The more karmic merits one has rendered, the better one’s luck shall be. But it is also possible for those who have ordinary karmic merits to be

tremendously lucky as well, and sometimes even astonishingly so.”

Karmic luck and karmic virtue weren’t identical. If one had a high level of karmic virtue, then one would naturally be blessed with additional luck. But, for example, if one apprenticed one’s self to a major power of the Three Realms, one would also be blessed by karmic luck. If one’s parents were major powers of the Three Realm, one would similarly be blessed.

Or perhaps, because of a tremendous stroke of fortune, one would suddenly have the blessing of luck.

One could tell at a glance if a person had high or low karmic virtue, but luck...this was unfathomable and invisible.

Whoosh. The black-robed Emperor suddenly produced a wrapped diagram in his hand. He unfurled the diagram, and atop it, one could vaguely make out a painting of a bright moon, hanging over a mountain and a river.

The eyes of the Celestial Immortals all lit up. The Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers...

This was a Pure Yang magic treasure. It was a tremendously intriguing artifact for them...but at the same time, these Celestial Immortals were all pondering nonstop. Today, the Grand Xia Emperor had barely said anything to these Celestial Immortals before immediately beginning the initial selection tournament for the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. From this, they could tell how much importance this Conclave held for the Grand Xia Emperor. In fact, the very fact of him taking out the Diagram and using it as the place for the competition was proof of how seriously he took this.

Rumble...

Ning and the others all raised their heads, looking towards the skies. The delegations from the 3600 commanderies and the four seas all raised their heads to stare as well.

In the air above them, an utterly enormous painting, at least ten

thousand kilometers long, had suddenly appeared. It blocked out the skies, and one could even vaguely make out the world within the diagram.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Ning, Yu Wei, the Sloppy Daoist, and the rest of the 109,362 individuals, who had all been just standing there, were suddenly and involuntarily pulled into the skies. All of them were sucked inwards as the surface of the vast painting began to undulate. When each of them touched the painting, their bodies also began to undulate; it was as though they were drops of rainwater that had landed on a lake.

In just the blink of an eye, all of them had completely disappeared.

.....

The main hall of the Skylight Palace. The black-robed Emperor finally revealed a smile as he said calmly, "This trial within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers shall most likely go on for a year. Everyone, watch at your leisure. Prepare the banquet!"

Instantly, a large number of maids immediately moved over. They placed down long tables, then delivered pitchers of Immortal nectar and platters of Immortal fruit.

All of the Celestial Immortals sat down in the lotus position. As for the followers that had come alongside them, they sat down in the lotus position to the side of and slightly behind the Celestial Immortals.

"You can watch everything which is going on within the Diagram." The black-robed Emperor pointed towards the clouds outside the main hall. The vast, ten thousand kilometer long diagram hung there amidst the clouds. The world within the diagram was clearly visible; within it, there were mountains, rivers, a bright moon, and more than a hundred thousand Wanxiang Adepts who were scattered in different areas.

"Dongyan, tell me, why do you think his Imperial Majesty cares so much about this Conclave of Immortal Destiny?" A scabby-looking old man seated next to the Dongyan Forefather spoke out. "He's personally hosting it, and even commanded people to participate. Although so many of us

Celestial Immortals have arrived, he is still mostly paying attention to the Conclave. Can it be that this Conclave is very special? Does it involve the reincarnation of someone exceptionally powerful? As I recall, a few decades back, the Netherworld Kingdom suffered a sudden attack, and the Six Paths of Reincarnation collapsed, right? Can this have something to do with it?"

"How am I supposed to know? However, the collapse of the Six Paths of Reincarnation is an absolutely world-changing event. The mysteries behind its collapse must definitely be quite shocking. We should just stay in our own major world and not go running around wildly; otherwise, something might happen and we might even fall. In addition, although the Six Paths of Reincarnation collapsed, the venerable Daofather has re-established the cycle of reincarnation for us and several dozen other major worlds. We have the protection of the venerable Daofather; there's no need for us to panic," the Dongyan Forefather sent back.

The scabby-looking old man nodded as well.

While the Dongyan Forefather and Patriarch Riverbridge were discussing their worries regarding the impending storm, Ninelotus, seated behind the Dongyan Forefather, was carefully watching the ten thousand kilometer long painting.

The painting was truly enormous, so much so that the individual figures within it could be seen clearly.

"Where is Ji Ning?" Ninelotus couldn't help but search for him.

.....

"Where is Ji Ning?" Yuchi Xiyue was seated behind King Yan in the lotus position. She, too, was carefully staring at the enormous painting. "Little brother, you have to be careful. Be careful!"

.....

"Where is Master?"

In the plaza below the painting, amidst the delegation led by the Marquis of Stillwater, Mu Northson was standing next to a large, snowy

white hound and an azure-robed maiden. Ning had gone out to battle, but spirit-beasts were forbidden from participating. Thus, Uncle White and Little Qing had to stay with Northson for now as they watched the battle.

“Don’t worry. Senior apprentice-brother is a truly monstrous genius; back in the Witchriver Immortal Estate, he was in such dire straits, but in the end he was still able to kill Youngflame Nong and that Fiendgod. He absolutely will not easily die or easily give up.” Northson’s eyes were shining as he stared at the skies above him, and at the massive, illusory world that had appeared there.

This illusory world was an image of the situation within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. One could clearly see every single figure located within the mountains, the rivers, the grasslands, and the forests of the world.

The Whitewater Hound, Little Qing, and Northson quickly scanned the massive painting with their gaze, flashing past one figure after another.

“Look.” Uncle White suddenly spoke out as he stared at one location. Northson and Little Qing followed Uncle White’s gaze, looking over as well. Indeed; within one particular corner of that world, there was a fur-clad youth within a mountain gorge.

“Senior apprentice-brother.” Northson’s eyes lit up.

“Master.” Little Qing watched with excitement as well.

The nearby Immortal Fivecraze quickly discovered Ning as well. His eyes were also filled with excitement.

.....

The people of this plaza, filled with delegations from the 3600 commanderies and four seas, were all staring upwards, trying to find the people they cared about within the painting. They quickly were able to find them, and they began to watch eagerly, quietly praying for the people they cared about to end up as one of the final 96 survivors.

Within the world of the Diagram.

Ning had suddenly felt the world change as soon as he touched the diagram. He had suddenly appeared within a mountain gorge.

“A gorge?” The Darknorth swords instantly appeared in Ning’s hands. He carefully scanned his surroundings, so cautious that he didn’t even use divine sense. This was because, upon using divine sense, the enemy would locate him as soon as he found them. A solid majority of the participants of this Conclave all possessed divine sense, after all.

Swoosh. Suddenly, a light flashed past Ning’s eyes, and a green talisman appeared before him.

“Each of you shall have a talisman. If you no longer wish to fight and wish to give up, you only need to throw the talisman away, and I will immediately throw you out of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers.” The voice of the Grand Xia Emperor rang out in the minds of the hundred thousand-plus individuals.

Ning immediately reached out to grasp the talisman.

Chapter 4: True Immortals, Bodhisattvas

After taking the talisman, Ning turned to stare at the gorge before him. He was the only person present within it.

“So I was separated from senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei and eldest apprentice-brother Sloppy, just like that. It makes sense. The Grand Xia Emperor won’t let us so easily join forces. In addition, per the rules, the more talismans you acquire, the better a chance you would have of passing this trial. If I don’t kill others, others will still try to kill me. In this trial...I will have to kill!” Ning made up his mind on what to do, but suddenly, his ears twitched.

Rumble...

A faint ripple of power swept out.

With a swoosh, Ning immediately flew to the very top of the nearby mountain, stealthily looking towards the source of the ripples. In the distant wilderness, eight men and women were separately using magic treasures and techniques against each other. It was an utter clash of attacks, causing the color of the sky to change. These were all peerless geniuses from various places of the Grand Xia Empire, all of whom had the pride innate to all geniuses. How could they easily admit defeat?

However, one of the young women quickly began to weaken slightly, and the other seven immediately began to focus their attacks on her. That woman, dressed in violet, immediately sent out her divine sense to scan the nearby 300 kilometers, then hurriedly sent mentally, “Everyone, let’s stop fighting. There are a total of 103 Wanxiang Adepts who are hidden in the surrounding area. If we keep fighting like this, we are going to get ambushed by others.”

“What?! 103?!” The other seven were badly frightened.

None of them knew exactly how large this world within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers was; they thought that a short battle wouldn’t attract too much attention. Who would have imagined that 103 individuals would come? Although they were very self-confident,

they knew that all the participants in this Conclave were formidable and could not be underestimated.

Rumble!

After the violet-robed maiden sent out her divine sense, the other Wanxiang Adepts all sent out their own divine senses to investigate in succession. Some of them were reincarnated Immortals, while others had been at the Wanxiang level for far too long, and so their soul had also reached the divine sense level. A few also has supreme visualization techniques. In short, they did a scan, and they were all shocked by what they found.

“A fur-clad youth? That’s Ji Ning! Ji Ning, up there on the mountain! He’s the one who killed a Loose Immortal.”

“Ji Ning is atop that mountain.”

“Ji Ning is ranked in the top hundred for this Conclave. Let’s join forces to wipe him out first.” The divine senses joined together as they began to converse through it.

Since they had decided to attend this Conclave, they had naturally purchased intelligence reports from the Heavenly Treasures Mountain. Ever since Ning’s Primaltwin had killed Immortal Floatcloud, his fame had skyrocketed. Even the Heavenly Treasures Mountain had come to believe that Ning’s Primaltwin, despite being only at the peak Primal level, was capable of killing supreme Loose Immortals. This meant that Ning was superior to Loose Immortal Floatcloud in terms of the Dao and in terms of techniques; naturally, this caused Ning to become quite famous.

“Let’s join forces and wipe him out.”

“Let’s go.”

These Wanxiang Adepts quickly came to the same conclusion. They howled through the air, flying towards the mountain top where Ning was standing. More than a hundred figures suddenly flew out, moving at astonishing speeds like thunderbolts or swift gales.

Ning was badly startled.

“These individuals are all heroic talents in their own locales, but they don’t seem to care about their bearing at all.” Ning was helpless; he had watched those eight fight, and none of them were easy to deal with. He was confident in being able to deal with eight, but more than a hundred? That was suicide!

“Time to go.” Ning waved his arm, and a ship-type treasure appeared before him. Ning immediately jumped into it. Swoosh! The ship instantly transformed into a streak of black light, disappearing without a trace into the distance.

“Ji Ning ran quite quickly.”

“He killed Youngflame Nong, then a Loose Immortal. It is said that he is valued by King Yan as well. He really has quite a few treasures, and he really was able to run quite fast.” The hundred-plus men and women in the air felt helpless as well. Unless they had already completely encircled him, if someone like Ning who was clearly more powerful than them wished to flee, it would be hard for them to stop him.

They quickly began to stare vigilantly against each other, stealthily pulling apart.

Nobody wanted to suddenly start a giant, chaotic battle of over a hundred people. They were confident in their ability to handle a wild battle with seven or eight people, but a wild battle with over a hundred... once a person was trapped, there would be no way to escape.

“Time to go.”

“This is going to be troublesome. More than a hundred thousand people, all of whom are crafty and cautious. To be able to survive to the very end and become one of the final 96...that is going to be very difficult.”

“Power alone won’t be enough. Even the most powerful competitor, when surrounded and attacked by a hundred in a formation, will have no option but death.”

The people all quickly departed.

As for Ning...only after his ship had fled more than several thousand kilometers and entered a large mountain did Ning reappear.

“To overcome the trial of the Diagram...power is just one aspect of it. This is also a trial of the mind, a trial of intelligence.” Ning quickly understood this. Everyone was a Wanxiang Adept, after all, and everyone was a supreme talent. They had all essentially reached the limit of what was possible for a Wanxiang Adept to accomplish; to be able to improve any further would be incredibly difficult.

The average person here was at least comparable to an ordinary peak Primal Daoist! If a hundred people joined together in a formation, then they would definitely be comparable to a supreme Loose Immortal!

“I have to be careful and cautious...and also ruthless. I need to seize any opportunities and to kill at high speed. I can’t let myself be surrounded.” Ning nodded to himself.

In the plaza below, the delegates from the 3600 commanderies and the four seas all raised their heads and watched, extremely nervous.

Previously, they had all felt that their own disciples were quite formidable, but as they watched...they realized that every single person was crafty and capable. There were more than ten thousand who had reached the twelfth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]! There were even more who had cultivated earthfire or dire-ice to the first grade. None of them were easy to deal with.

“Why is it that I suddenly feel as though senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei, and eldest apprentice-brother are all in a lot of danger?” Northson blinked.

“Right.” Adept Vastriver shook his head. “As I see it...I imagine that most likely, more than half of these individuals are reincarnated Immortals.”

The Whitewater Hound and Little Qing just stared fixedly at the skies, paying attention to Ning the entire time. Wherever Ning ran to, their gazes would turn to.

The atmosphere within the main hall of the Skylight Palace, by contrast, was much more relaxed.

The black-robed Emperor sat there. He took a sip from the wineglass he was holding, then said with a smile, “This Conclave shall initially proceed within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers for a year. This is just the beginning; the most exciting parts will come later.”

The Celestial Immortals seated below him were all chatting and laughing as well.

“That little fellow isn’t bad. He actually killed someone, then scared someone into throwing their talisman away. Who is that little fellow?”

“I don’t recognize him.”

“Never seen him.”

The Celestial Immortals chatted and laughed, but as they watched, they saw that likes of the long-famous ‘Xiamang Zishan’, ‘Cangwu Jiu’, ‘Adept Woodpass’, and others had yet to truly put on an awe-inspiring display. Instead, they suffered repeated attacks by groups of others and were often put in quite sorry positions. To the contrary, it was the figures that they had never heard about and who were heretofore unknown who were suddenly revealing their terrifying power.

“A cataclysm of the Three Realms truly does cause heroes to gather.” The black-robed Emperor was quite satisfied. “I imagine that many formidable figures who no one had ever known about in the past are going to display their truly shocking power.”

Right at this moment...

Suddenly, a clear voice rang out. “Fellow Daoist Xiamang, I come uninvited; are you willing to welcome me, fellow Daoist?”

The black-robed Emperor’s face changed slightly, and the thousand Celestial Immortals seated below him all quieted down as well. From the mists and clouds outside, eight figures suddenly appeared, each of whom had different appearances. There was a dissolute, handsome man who was dressed in an azure Daoist robe; there was a middle-aged Buddhist

who was dressed in yellow robes; there was an old man who was riding an old bull; there was a muscular, golden-eyed man who was dressed in dragon robes...

All eight of them had marvelous, unfathomable, profound auras about them.

The eight caused the thousand Celestial Immortals to secretly feel as though their hearts were trembling. As for the Grand Xia Emperor, he immediately arose from his throne and walked down.

“Fellow Daoists, why is it that you’ve decided to come to my Grand Xia?” The black-robed Emperor laughed, “Come, come, come and sit!” He waved a hand, and on the two sides next to his throne, eight more seats and tables appeared. Immortal fruit and nectar appeared atop the tables as well, and they were far better than the fare provided to the Celestial Immortals.

“Why we came to your Grand Xia? Fellow Daoist Xiamang, can it be that you don’t know?” The leader of the group, an azure-robed man who carried an Immortal sword on his back, laughed in a hearty manner. “The Three Realms are currently filled with dangerous hidden undercurrents. Most likely, a great cataclysm is coming. This is precisely the point in time when heroic figures will emerge into the world. Your Grand Xia is one of the most highly ranked of the three thousand major worlds in terms of karmic luck; perhaps one of the peerless figures of the future will be born here. That is why I, Lu Dongbin, have shamelessly come here. You won’t mind, will you, fellow Daoist Xiamang?” 1

Although his voice echoed loudly, none of the nearby Celestial Immortals could hear anything.

“Senior apprentice-brother Xiamang, my own major world just concluded a Conclave of Immortal Destiny, and so Eastflower paid a visit to my place, then insisted on pulling me here as well.” The muscular, golden-eyed man who was dressed in dragon robes spoke in a resigned manner.

“Sovereign Hao, since you knew how shameless this Lu Dongbin is, you

truly should have stopped him.” The Xia Emperor spoke with resignation.

“As for myself, this old man is just here to watch the fun. Don’t worry, don’t worry; I’m not here to try and snatch some of the geniuses from your major world,” the old man riding the old bull laughed merrily.

“I’m just here to watch the fun as well.”

“I’m just wandering about.”

They all spoke out.

This caused the Xia Emperor to feel exceptionally resigned; the individuals in front of him were all awe-inspiringly famous and influential figures of the Three Realms. For example, there was Lu Dongbin, the leader of the Eight Immortals of the High Caves. Lu Dongbing was the reincarnation of Emperor Eastflower, and back when he had been Emperor Eastflower, he had apprenticed himself to a major power. After reincarnating and becoming Lu Dongbin, he had apprenticed himself to a second major power.

Behind him, a single person, stood two major powers. What’s more, Lu Dongbin had merged the strong points from both schools, infusing them into his Dao of the Sword. He was known in the Three Realms to be frighteningly powerful...and he was a famous, awe-inspiring Sword Immortal! Even amongst Pure Yang True Immortals, he was ranked towards the very front.

However, Lu Dongbin was utterly shameless, had a weird temper, liked to play tricks on people, and cursed or giggled as he pleased...and he often liked to wander about the mortal realms, leaving behind quite a few legacies in many of the worlds he passed through.

“And you, Mahasthamaprapta? Why have you, a member of the Buddhist way, come here?” The Xia Emperor’s gaze fell upon the yellow-robed Buddhist. Followers of the Daoist path felt a certain degree of disliking towards followers of the Buddhist path. 2

The male Buddhist had a smile on his face that made others feel calm. Clasping his palms together in a prayer, he said, “I’m just here to take a

look."

The Xia Emperor was helpless.

Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, the Bodhisattva of Great Strength, was someone who had an extremely high status amongst those of the Buddhist path. He was someone who had followed Lord Buddha for a long period of time, and was also someone comparable to a Pure Yang True Immortal. In addition, he had an extremely good temperament, always having a smile on his face whenever he met anyone. In the face of such a truly kind, amiable individual...there was no way the Xia Emperor could shoo him off.

"Everyone, take your seats. Why are you all standing? Others will think that the Xia clan doesn't understand how to treat guests." The Xia Emperor said, rather impolitely, "But everyone, please understand this; I'm not the only person paying attention to this Conclave of Immortal Destiny of the Grand Xia. Even my venerable Master is paying close attention to it as well. Thus, the only one who can choose a disciple must be my venerable Master."

"We naturally won't fight over with the Daofather over a disciple. Xiamang, stop worrying. After you have made your picks, if I take a fancy to one of the remaining individuals, there won't be any problems if I choose him, right?" Lu Dongbin had been the first to plop his butt down on the seat, then had picked up a bottle of Immortal nectar and started to drink. His eyes instantly lit up.

"Hey, this is good wine. Not bad! Your Xiamang clan truly lives up to its reputation as being of the lineage of the imperial Xia clan of the Primordial Era. You have so much fine wine, and it's even better than the Celestial Court's. What's the name of this wine?" As he spoke, Lu Dongbin's eyes began to spin as he turned to stare at the massive Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, carefully inspecting each of the young men and women within it.

1. Lu Dongbin is one of the most famous Immortals in Chinese mythology, and he is reputed to lead an entire group known as the Eight Immortals, although these eight are not them. From this point on in the story, a lot of 'real' Chinese mythology is going to be incorporated. I will do my best to point it out when it occurs via footnotes.
2. Mahasthamaprapta is a bodhisattva of wisdom; his name means 'great strength'.

Chapter 5: Life in the Diagram

The other Pure Yang True Immortals all turned their gazes towards the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers as well. The Xia Emperor felt resigned. He mused to himself, “It seems it truly is the time for a cataclysm to befall the Three Realms. All the major powers are beginning to make their preparations. My Master, Daofather Crimsonbright, has previously provided some tutelage to Lu Dongbin in the past as well. In his past life, Lu Dongbin had a very close relationship with me. He’s not an issue, nor are the others...but that bodhisattva, Mahasthamaprapta!”

The Xia Emperor knew very well that the supreme powers of the Three Realms were divided into many different organizations.

Fortunately, all of the eight Pure Yang True Immortals who had arrived today had major powers backing them who were on good terms with his own master, Daofather Crimsonbright. The only exception was Mahasthamaprapta, who was of the Buddhist path. It couldn’t be said that he was on good terms with Daofather Crimsonbright...but they weren’t enemies either.

“I have to be careful. If he takes a fancy to one of the individuals in this Conclave, Mahasthamaprapta might actually plot to abduct the person in secret,” the Xia Emperor pondered to himself.

Within the Diagram.

Ning was atop a dwarf mountain, his body covered by trees and shrubs.

“Before killing Immortal Floatcloud, I was a very ordinary, unremarkable figure in the intelligence reports of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain who was casually mentioned in them. After killing him, however, my name became widespread throughout the Grand Xia Empire. Even the intelligence reports praise me tremendously, claiming that I have the power to rank in the top hundred.” Ning felt helpless.

The Heavenly Treasures Mountain had to have some margin for error, and so in truth, they had only ranked thirty-two individuals as having the

power to rank in the top hundred! The thirty-two the Heavenly Treasures Mountain ranked as being in the top hundred were all but guaranteed to truly have that power...and Ning was one of those thirty-two!

From this, one could imagine how within the Diagram, the top thirty-two such as Xiamang Zishan, Cangwu Jiu, Ji Ning would instantly be attacked by groups upon them being discovered! The other Immortal cultivators all believed that the likes of Ji Ning had a very high chance of winning, and so they needed to eliminate them as soon as possible. Only then would they themselves have a chance to pass this trial.

"I need to change myself slightly." Ning had just suffered an attack from more than a hundred individuals. Fortunately, his treasured ship had been able to flee fast enough.

Whoosh.

Ning's magic robes transformed into ordinary black robes, no longer appearing like furs.

"There should be quite a few black-robed youths," Ning mused to himself. "I won't be recognized on sight, at least."

"Time go to."

From a fur-clad youth to a black-robed youth. Ning quietly began to wander the world of the Diagram. Every so often, he would spread out his divine sense to scan the ten surrounding kilometers.

Within this short distance, Ning could instantly move to a location...and that way, he wouldn't startle too many with his divine sense.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! He spread out his divine sense repeatedly. On the eighteenth time, Ning immediately discovered a white-robed maiden who suddenly turned her head towards him, having noticed him.

Swoosh! Ning seemed to have transformed into a giant Roc, howling through the air as he moved at lightning speed and charged down from his mountain peak. In a flash, he appeared in front of the white-robed maiden.

“Do you want to die?” The white-robed maiden’s face turned cold, and a pair of short sticks appeared in her hands, flashing with electric light.

As Ning attacked, the first thing he did was will an enormous Waterflame Lotus to appear. After developing the Lotusflower Swordland, he had gained insights into both this technique and his Waterflame Lotus due to their commonalities. During the past year at the imperial capital of the Grand Xia, Ning had carefully worked to further refine his technique, making the Waterflame Lotus technique even more perfect!

In addition, after a full year of cultivation, the earthfire and dire-ice in Ning’s body had already risen to the first grade as well!

The earthfire and dire-ice of the first grade served as the foundation, and the True Lunar Tattoo and the True Solar Tattoo within his divine body activated fire and water of the natural world in support. The Dao of the Sword, the Dao of Rainwater, the Dao of the Inferno, the Dao of the Gale, and the Dao of Space were all joined together as well...to finally form into this Waterflame Lotus, which now had reached a ridiculous level of power.

“Eh?” The white-robed maiden was completely shocked. This enormous Waterflame Lotus was at least three thousand meters, completely surrounding her.

“A technique?” The white-robed maiden laughed coldly. Her body suddenly expanded dramatically in size as she transformed into a thirty-six meter tall giant. The giant white-robed maiden also activated the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability. In her hands, she now wielded six of the short sticks, each of which flashed with electric light. The sticks in her hand howled through the air as she smashed downwards towards the layers of Waterflame Lotus petals binding her.

BANG!

BANG!

It was as though two mountains had collided. The six short sticks carried the majestic, divine power of lightning. Given the power of this woman, a Fiendgod Body Refiner, when she smashed down upon the

flower, a layer of leaves cracked...but new leaves were then born from the Waterflame Lotus.

“What?!” The white-robed maiden was shocked. Per her predictions, she should’ve been able to smash through this technique like rotting wood, but in reality, the breaking process was very slow. The enemy’s technique could continue to be maintained indefinitely.

“What a fellow. This white-robed maiden is probably even a bit more powerful than Daoist Snowplume was.” Ning was shocked as well.

“Fortunately, my earthfire and dire-ice have both reached the first grade, and I’ve further perfected this technique. If this was a year ago...she probably would’ve broken through it. However...since you can’t break through my Waterflame Lotus, then you have lost.”

Whoosh!

More than seven hundred flying swords immediately appeared in the air around Ning, with the Nethercold swords serving as the core. All of them were Earth-ranked flying swords.

“Go!” Ning pointed, and instantly, a golden flying sword that had formed in front of his chest howled forth as it flew out, striking towards the white-robed maiden. The golden flying sword carried a terrifying sword-intent that struck directly at the opponent’s soul. This was the terrifying sword-intent which only Sword Immortals possessed.

“You are Adept Darknorth...Ji Ning!” The white-robed maiden called out in shock. Lotus-type techniques were fairly common, but upon seeing those seven hundred-plus flying swords? If she wasn’t able to put two and two together and recognize Ning from this, it would have been bizarre.

Clang! In the face of the attack of the sword light from Ning’s [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], the white-robed maiden hurriedly used all six short sticks to block.

BOOM!

The power of Ning’s [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was far greater than the Waterflame Lotus; the Waterflame Lotus was primarily

meant to bind and grind an opponent, whereas the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was a purely offensive technique. Ning was using nearly ninety percent of his spiritual energy on maintaining the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. The white-robed maiden was knocked flying backwards, and two of the short sticks flew out of her hands. She was, however, blocked from behind by the Waterflame Lotus once more.

Whooosh.

The killing, grinding power of the Waterflame Lotus was constantly pressing down on the white-robed maiden's body.

"Damn you." The white-robed maiden gritted her teeth, staring viciously at Ning. "Ji Ning, you are a piece of work."

She tossed out her talisman.

Rumble! An invisible power instantly covered her body, and then she was teleported away.

"How powerful." Ning waved his hand, collecting the talisman. "A random person I encountered was already this powerful...fortunately, I was able to use the Waterflame Lotus to bind her. Otherwise, she would've fled upon realizing she couldn't beat me."

The intelligence reports of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain stated quite clearly that Ji Ning's true body was skilled in close combat. Next was his flying swords formation, which was significantly weaker than Ji Ning's close combat ability.

The white-robed woman had realized that Ning was capable of using just his sword formation to completely suppress her, and would most likely be able to kill her in just ten exchanges or so! If he closed to engage in close quarters combat...he might be able to kill her in just one or two exchanges. With the Waterflame Lotus binding her and preventing her from fleeing, she had no choice but to admit defeat. That way, she would at least stay alive.

.....

Ning carefully advanced, continuing to be very cautious for fear of

suffering another group attack. There was a reason why his power was such that the Heavenly Treasures Mountain ranked him as being within the top hundred.

After all, Ning's true body relied on his divine abilities to do battle, and had been able to stay alive against the assault of a Whitebone Immortal Slaying Needle! This was enough to ensure that the Heavenly Treasures Mountain viewed Ning's true body as definitely being extremely formidable in close combat.

One against one...

It was true that within the Diagram, Ning was indeed one of the supreme fighters.

Against ordinary foes, the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] and the Waterflame Lotus was already enough to suppress them.

Against powerful foes, he would have to use both the Waterflame Lotus and close quarters combat.

But of course...that was in one-on-one fights.

"All of the fairly famous individuals are beginning to slowly display their might." The Xia Emperor accompanied the eight Pure Yang True Immortals in drinking as he watched.

Previously, Xiamang Zishan, Cangwu Jiu, and the others had all suffered quite a bit. However, they quickly hid their tracks and began to act with great caution. Whether through killing their foes or forcing them to voluntarily give up, they began to slowly accumulate more and more talismans. Still...things were quite early. Thus, with each kill, they only acquired one or two talismans.

"That dirty-looking maiden, she's quite formidable." The Xia Emperor's eyes lit up.

The Xia Emperor suddenly looked towards the nearby Lu Dongbin. Lu Dongbin had left behind many legacies throughout the Three Realms, and liked to take on new disciples. Amongst Pure Yang True Immortals, he was one of the most powerful; naturally, he had quite an astute gaze.

The Xia Emperor couldn't help but laugh and say, "Lu Dongbin, which of these youths do you view as having the most luck surrounding them?"

"The most luck?" Lu Dongbin half-lay there, sipping his wine. He glanced out of the corner of his eyes at the Diagram, then shook his head and said, "How can you tell just by looking? Luck is unfathomable and ever-changing to begin with...even someone with tremendous luck can still be killed."

The Xia Emperor felt resigned. Of course he knew that lucky individuals could be killed as well. Those blessed by luck would just have more lucky encounters and have the assistance of the heavens. They could still, however, be killed! In fact, the person who killed them might even be able to steal their luck...but it was also possible that their own luck would lessen as a result.

For example, let's say an individual was the only child of a major power. Killing this person would cause the major power to feel great hatred, and perhaps even personally intervene; in this case, one's luck would naturally lessen.

For another example, if one person had a tremendous stroke of fortune and acquired a huge treasure repository, this person could be said to have had great luck. But if he were to killed by another and his treasure repository stolen, then his luck would now be the killer's.

Thus...

Luck was something which could neither be seen or felt; it could only be hypothesized based on numerous factors. This required astute judgment. Clearly, Lu Dongbin was a person with incredibly astute judgment.

"You alcoholic! I asked you to tell me, but you refused to." The Xia Emperor felt resigned. "Of course I know that lucky individuals can be killed, but lucky individuals will still have a higher chance of becoming powerful figures of the Three Realms, right?"

"But what if I told you, then you picked that person?" Lu Dongbin glanced sideways at him. "Pick your own. I told you that I'll definitely let you and your Daofather pick first. I'll pick from whoever is left."

The Xia Emperor felt resigned. What could he do against such a shameless person?

.....

Within the Diagram. More than five days had passed. Ning was currently resting within a cavern estate. There was a cold pool of water here. When washing his face in it, Ning felt incomparably refreshed.

“Five days. I’ve acquired a total of fifty talismans,” Ning mused to himself. “However...at the beginning, there will be many Wanxiang Adepts within the Diagram, and I would often encounter them. Later on, however, the number will begin to drop and it will be more rare to run into someone. In addition, those who survive until the end will be extremely powerful and hard to deal with.”

“Still, there’s a benefit to that as well; those who survive for longer will also have more talismans on them.” Ning’s eyes suddenly flickered.

Rumble...

A vague, trembling ripple was sweeping towards him from far away.

“A battle? And it seems it’s quite a big one.” Ning immediately transformed into a streak of light, leaving the cavern and carefully moving closer.

Chapter 6: Junior Apprentice-Brother Ji Ning

The Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers was perpetually cast in the glow of moonlight.

Ji Ning passed through a mountain forest, silently and soundlessly arriving at the mountain's peak. He hid there within the grass, staring into the distance.

Off in the distance, within a gorge, there was a mirror-like lake. A massive battle was underway at the lake; three individuals were attacking a single woman.

The three individuals included a black-robed man who hovered in midair, an enormous black Flood Dragon coming into being in front of him. The black Flood Dragon appeared to be real, and its aura was powerful. It was savagely attacking the woman.

The second of the three attackers was a silver-haired woman. The silver-haired woman, every so often, would open her mouth, and with a whooooosh, an incomparably terrifying gust of balewind would be unleashed. It was as though countless sharp swords were flying out, slicing away at even the ground itself. The balewind, carrying a glowing azure light, was savagely attacking the woman as well.

The last attacker was a silver-robed youth with a cold, arrogant face. He pointed from far away into the air, and as he did, an enormous greatsword that was three hundred meters long would appear, chopping down repeatedly as its tip pierced towards the woman!

The person the three were attacking...

Was an absolutely peerless black-robed beauty. Around her, there was a pair of enormous phoenixes, one of fire and one of ice, which swirled around her, struggling to defend. However, under the triple attack, the woman was clearly finding it quite hard to endure. In addition, the coiling black dragon continually attacked her as well, giving her no way to flee or

escape.

“Senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei!” Ning stared. The woman being attacked was, amazingly, Yu Wei. The black-robed man’s eyes had grown bloodshot, and it seemed as though the black Flood Dragon was about to change...

“HOLD!” A sudden, explosive roar exploded from Ning’s lips.

Swoosh!

Ning immediately utilized the [Windwing Evasion], seeming to have transformed into a giant Roc as he howled through the air towards them.

.....

Yu Wei had felt that she had become trapped in a dire situation. The three in front of her were all extraordinarily strong, especially the one with the giant black dragon. The black Flood Dragon was the personification of a magic treasure formation that was absolutely massive. Its coiling body completely surrounded her.

As for the silver-haired woman, her balewind technique was extremely amazing as well. When the gust of balewind blew out, when one tried to dodge, it felt as though one was moving against the wind. The technique lowered her speed ridiculously.

“It’s only the sixth day, but I’m already in grave danger.” Yu Wei gritted her teeth.

Rumble...

Thirty-six Rahu Godneedles formed into an enormous phoenix of ice, whose entire body seemed to be produced from arcane ice that was incomparably hard. It blocked the balewind repeatedly, as well as the strikes from the Flood Dragon and the massive sword. This was the absolute best defensive technique Yu Wei had available to her.

As for the other thirty-six Rahu Godneedles, they were formed into the enormous phoenix of fire. Its flames blazed ferociously, and it clashed repeatedly against the balewind, causing even the balewind to crumble,

while at other times forcing the Flood Dragon or the massive sword back. But it could only knock back one thing at a time.

“Senior apprentice-brother, senior apprentice-sister, this woman’s power is formidable; she certainly must have many talismans on her. She might have over a hundred! I’ll tie her down; you two, kill her at one blow.” The black-haired man sent a mental message to the other two. They were from the same school, and although he seemed old, he was actually the junior disciple.

“Alright.

“It’ll be up to you, junior apprentice-brother.” The silver-haired woman and the silver-robed youth both responded.

The black-robed man immediately gritted his teeth as his eyes began to turn bloodshot. His elemental ki wildly exploded forth, and the enormous black Flood Dragon let out a furious howl as its head actually split into two enormous heads. The two-headed black Flood Dragon’s aura instantly expanded greatly, and it threw itself towards the phoenix of ice. So long as it was able to break through the phoenix of ice, Yu Wei wouldn’t have anything to rely on and would be finished.

“Damn.” Yu Wei gritted her white teeth, revealing a look of savagery as well.

But right at this moment...

“HOLD!” A furious roar, filled without elemental ki, instantly exploded forth into the area.

The silver-haired woman, the silver-robed man, and the black-robed man all turned to look. They saw a black-robed youth who was howling through the air as he flew towards them like a giant Roc.

Yu Wei turned her head and saw the black-robed youth flying towards them from afar. Upon seeing his face...her heart suddenly shook.

“Ji Ning!” Yu Wei couldn’t believe it. In the moment that she had been trapped in a dire situation, her junior apprentice-brother had actually arrived as well.

“Can this be fate?” Yu Wei’s heart instantly was thrown into a rather chaotic state.

Actually, a long time ago, shortly after Ning had joined the Black-White College, Yu Wei had investigated Ning’s background and learned of his past...she, too, had a tragic past, and her parents had both passed away as well.

This was why Yu Wei had, from the very beginning, felt well-disposed towards Ning. When Ning had instantly shocked everyone in such a splendid manner during the Dao Debates, she liked him even more. In the end, after she personally intervened and defeated Ning, she even teased him a little bit.

Given her normal, icy disposition, why would she so casually tease one of her junior apprentice-brothers like that?

She had always been quietly watching Ning...

However, Ning ended up being together with Ninelotus. This tied Yu Wei’s heart up in knots, but all she could do was silently bless them and hide everything she felt in her heart.

Afterwards, when she learned that Ning had defeated Daoist Snowplume, she had an excuse to go seek him out alongside Mu Northson and Adept Vastriver. In fact, she had even been preparing to stay for the next two or three years at Serpentwing Lake, but who would’ve thought that Youngflame Nong would invite them to the Witchriver Immortal Estate?

That journey to the Witchriver Immortal Estate! In the end, it caused Ninelotus and Ning to part ways for good.

Ninelotus had chosen to leave. As she had, in that moment, Yu Wei had a sudden impulse...she wanted to say to Ning, ‘I will go with you!’ But she wasn’t in a position to say such a thing; she was not Ning’s Dao-companion. In addition, her power was truly not enough to help Ning at all in facing the disaster that was unfolding for him. The only thing she could do was wrack her brains to come up with strategies for him!

After she and Ning separated, she watched as he wandered by himself. She could only repress all her feelings once more, and once more silently bless him.

Who would have imagined...

Ning was even more brilliant than she had thought he would be. His Primaltwin had actually slain Immortal Floatcloud, causing the Youngflame clan to be unable to do anything to him. In addition, Ning was participating in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny as well! This caused a surge of delight in Yu Wei's heart. Only...after entering the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, they had all been separated.

"The world of the Diagram is enormous, and there are more than a hundred thousand people present. On just the sixth day, and coincidentally just as I found myself in a dire situation, Ji Ning arrived? Can this be fate? Are the hands of fate at work here?" Yu Wei was shocked, delighted, and stunned.

The distant Ning howled through the air like a streak of lightning. The silver-robed youth, the silver-haired woman, and the black-robed man were all enraged.

"Junior apprentice-sister, stop him," the silver-robed youth sent mentally.

"Right."

The silver-haired maiden immediately stared at the distant Ning. Suddenly, she opened her mouth. Whooooooosh. The balewind came out, filling the skies with its azure light. If one looked carefully, one would be able to see that in reality, this was a tempest formed from countless azure needles, and thus had even more penetrative power than ordinary wind attacks.

Whooooooosh.

A beautiful Waterflame Lotus appeared, swiveling around Ning. The enormous Waterflame Lotus was incomparably resilient, and the layers of

leaves actually completely blocked the balewind. After all, Ning was using earthfire and dire-ice of the first grade to serve as his foundation of this technique, then activating the fire and water of the natural world to condense around it.

In terms of technique quality, Ning was a hair above his opponent; this was a self-created technique, after all.

In addition, he had both earthfire and dire-ice, whereas this woman only had balewind.

Although the power of her balewind was truly astonishing, it was still blocked by the Waterflame Lotus.

“F*ck off!” The approaching Ning’s body suddenly expanded as he transformed into a 54 meter tall black-robed giant. The surface of his body flowed with electricity, and Ning’s forehead suddenly split open as well, revealing a vertical eye.

Divine ability – [Divine Thunderbolt Eye]!

CRACK! A bolt of lightning thundered out from Ning’s third eye, that vertical slit in his forehead. It was astonishingly fast, and it struck directly against the round umbrella which had suddenly appeared in the hands of that distant, silver-haired woman. [Pentabolt Vajra] and [Divine Thunderbolt Eye]; these two divine abilities synergized, causing the power of his thunder to vastly surpass that of ordinary divine abilities. This caused the silver-haired woman to be knocked flying back by the thunderbolt, and she threw up a mouthful of blood. In addition, this [Divine Thunderbolt Eye] attack also contained a divine will attack as well.

“Argh!!!” The silver-haired woman let out a miserable cry.

“Protect senior apprentice-sister!” The black-haired man and the silver-robed youth were both greatly shocked. They had thought that the balewind would be enough to block the youth for a period of time, but who would’ve imagined that the enemy would not only easily block it, but also injure their senior apprentice-sister with a bolt of lightning?

“Let’s go.” The silver-robed youth couldn’t be bothered to deal with Yu Wei; the aura of this approaching black-robed youth who was protected by the Waterflame Lotus was simply too ferocious.

Rumble!

With but a thought, the silver-robed youth willed the surface of his massive, three hundred meter long greatsword to suddenly be covered with flowing runes. The power of his sword continuously rose and focused on the tip of the sword. This enormous sword pierced towards Ning, lightning-fast!

“You want to block me?” Ning surged forward like a rainbow streak of light, neither dodging nor moving away. The vertical eye in his forehead sent out two bolts of lightning in a row.

CRACK! CRACK!

One bolt of lightning struck towards the silver-robed youth, while the other struck towards the black-robed man.

The thunderbolts couldn’t be casually blocked; both of them knew this very well. Thus, they all immediately used powerful techniques to block against it. Around the silver-robed youth, a chain link suddenly appeared. CRACK! The thunderbolt was blocked by the chain link, which was knocked flying back by the collision. However, the divine will attack within the thunderbolt was transmitted into the silver-robed youth’s body, causing his face to change. However, he was able to withstand it.

As for the black-robed youth, he was protected by the black Flood Dragon, which withstood the lightning bolt. However, the divine will attack also penetrated invisibly into his body. His body suddenly swayed, and even the black Flood Dragon turned blurry for a moment. However, it quickly re-stabilized.

“Careful, his divine ability includes a divine will attack.” Only now did the silver-haired woman, who had been knocked to the ground by the earlier attack, manage to send a frantic mental message to them.

The main reason was that the two were battling far too fast. Ning had

immediately sent out three lightning bolts upon arriving, causing the heart of all three to be filled with amazement.

“[Soldiers of the Mind]!”

Immediately after having used a divine ability, Ning then revealed a true divine will attack; the [Soldiers of the Mind] he had acquired from the Witchriver Immortal Estate. This was an even more powerful technique than the Black-White College’s [Soulslayer Art]! Although Ning had also spent some time on other divine will techniques, most of his time had been spent on this, [Soldiers of the Mind]!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Within Ning’s sea of consciousness, his soul was seated in the lotus position, and a soldier’s seal was hovering in his hand. When his divine will was summoned forth from this soldier’s seal...it instantly transformed into invisible and untraceable sharp swords, warblades, and longspears. These spiritual weapons howled forth, striking towards the silver-robed youth, the black-robed man, and the silver-haired woman.

Imagine how fast divine will attacks were!

Sharp swords formed from divine will...they were incomparably sharp and stabbed right towards the soul!

Warblades formed from divine will...they carried an unstoppable might, hacking against the enemy soul with overwhelming brute force!

Longspears formed from divine will...they combined both of the advantages of the two other weapons, and were also savage in focusing their power at one point as they pierced straight towards the enemy!

Invisible, formless weapons that were created from divine will. The sharp swords, giant sabers, and longspears were savagely attacking the three!

Slash! Chop! Boom!

The souls of the three were immediately, violently assaulted by Ning’s divine will technique.

Chapter 7: It Must Be Love

Ji Ning's soul was comparable to many Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals, and [Soldiers of the Mind] was even more formidable than the [Soulslayer Art] technique. The power of his assault...it was so great that both the black-robed man and the silver-haired woman felt their souls rumble as they were sent into a dazed state. Only the silver-robed youth was dazed momentarily before immediately regaining consciousness.

"Not good." The silver-robed youth was shocked. "Even I passed out for a moment; how can junior apprentice-brother and junior apprentice-sister withstand that?"

However, at this moment, he could not do anything for the two of them, because Ning was pouncing towards him.

"Who on earth is this person? He is so powerful that just by using a divine will attack, he was able to set me back?" The silver-robed youth's heart clenched, and he didn't dare to be the least bit overconfident. He hadn't been able to recognize Ning, who had only used a single lotus technique so far.

"Your divine will attacks are formidable, but I refuse to believe that you are that formidable in actual combat as well." A cold look flashed through the eyes of the silver-robed youth. "Die!"

BAM! The power of the enormous, three hundred meter long greatsword was now completely focused on the tip, where black and white light had joined together to form a strand of golden sword-light. The silver-robed youth had already poured all of his power into this attack. A powerful soul might be stem from a person's birth; although the black-haired youth that was pouncing towards him had a powerful soul, he didn't necessarily have a high level of insight into the Dao.

"Die!" The charging Ning showed no mercy at all. The layers of the Waterflame Lotus swiveling around him blocked the massive sword, which repeatedly hacked against it but was firmly stopped.

A cold light flashed through Ning's eyes.

Divine ability – [StarSeizing Hand]!

CLANK! The Darknorth sword in Ning's hand instantly lit out a brilliant flash of sword-light, and with a massive boom, it collided against and actually knocked that enormous enemy sword flying. As for Ning, after the sword in his left hand knocked the massive sword flying, he immediately used the [Windwing Evasion] technique to arrive in front of the silver-robed youth.

The silver-robed youth was tremendously shocked. He couldn't believe that his most powerful technique had been knocked away by a single sword blow. He was one of the most elite of geniuses within his school! He no longer had the courage to fight against Ning, and he immediately produced dozens of talismans and threw them all away.

He had given up his talismans and was planning to flee.

It must be understood that the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers was a Pure Yang magic treasure; naturally, it had a soul as well. There was no way that Ning and the others could deceive the spirit of the Diagram as to how many talismans they had. They had to throw out all of their talismans in order to be teleported away.

Swish!

Ning's sword-light had already arrived in front of the silver-robed youth. Clang! The silver-robed youth used both his earthfire and his chains, striving to buy himself just a single moment of time.

BOOM!!!

Ning's sword-light was like an attack unleashed by one of those ancient, primordial Fiendgods. It possessed an utterly shocking power that shattered the earthfire and sent the chains flying. The body of the silver-robed youth, when struck, was instantly turned into pulp. Blood sprayed everywhere, along with chunks of flesh and bits of bone, but even as it sprayed everywhere, it was completely vaporized in midair by the terrifying sword-ki.

It was all too fast!

Although the silver-robed youth had already thrown away the talismans...there was an extremely short window of time between the talismans being thrown away and himself being teleported away. In a true, close quarters battle, that window of time was enough for Ning to attack ten more times with his sword!

Ning felt hatred for these three for daring to act against his senior apprentice-sister, and so he showed no mercy at all. In addition, the silver-robed youth truly was quite powerful; without using the [Starseizing Hand], Ning would only at most be able to seize an advantage; he wouldn't be able to cause the foe to completely collapse at all. He had to use his [Starseizing Hand], and use overwhelming raw power to deal with this foe!

BOOM!

BOOM!

The two enormous phoenixes of fire and ice struck against the bodies of the other two temporarily stunned Adepts. Although the stunning effect was only for a short moment, Yu Wei was a true expert as well; she naturally seized the chance to immediately change from defending to attacking as she sent her phoenix of fire and her phoenix of ice to separately attack the black-robed man and the silver-haired woman, instantly killing the two!

Yu Wei then turned her head, looking at the black-robed youth who was 54 meters tall, crackling with lightning, and who had a vertical eye-slit in his forehead. She was both excited and nervous.

“Senior apprentice-sister.” Ning’s third eye closed. The lightning around his body vanished. He returned to the size of a normal person.

“Junior apprentice-brother.” Yu Wei spoke out as well, and her eyes glistened like jewels.

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

“Those three are disciples of my Heavenly Silkworm Sect. That black-

robed woman is almost finished; yet another is going to be a slain and vanquished corpse of my Heavenly Silkworm Sect.” An extremely skinny and shriveled Celestial Immortal was laughing smugly right now.

Normally, when in front of their own disciples, these individuals would maintain the majestic decorum expected of a Celestial Immortal. Here, however, in front of all of these other Celestial Immortals, they would reveal his true personality, acting with abandon. When it was time to be smug, they would be smug; when it was time to mock, they would mock.

“That black-robed maiden is quite formidable as well. Look at those two techniques of hers; one is a phoenix of fire, the other a phoenix of ice. As I see it, she has absolutely mastered two complete Dao-Paths.” Next to the first Celestial Immortal was a laughing fat man whose robe was open, revealing his chest.

“Right. She has mastered two complete Dao-Paths. That’s the only reason why she was able to hold off the attacks of three of my sect’s disciples for a period of time,” the skinny, shriveled Celestial Immortal said confidently.

“Do you know which school the black-robed maiden comes from?” The bare-chested fat Immortal asked.

“No idea.” The wizened Celestial Immortal shook his head. “Who knows what minor sect she’s from? Major sects naturally sent quite a few disciples, who would usually travel in pairs or trios.”

The fat Immortal’s eyes suddenly lit up. “Help has arrived.”

The shriveled Celestial Immortal’s eyes narrowed. He, too, saw that within the enormous Diagram, a black-robed youth had suddenly appeared to assist the black-robed maiden being attacked by those three Adepts of his.

The black-robed youth was ridiculously powerful. He instantly defeated the three, as easily though he were bursting through rotting wood, and in the end all three died.

“Hmph.” The shriveled Celestial Immortal couldn’t help but frown. He

slammed his wineglass against the table, appearing to be quite vexed.

“Bahaha, didn’t you say the black-robed maiden was going to die?” The chubby Celestial Immortal began to laugh loudly.

In truth, Celestial Immortals like them didn’t care too much about the deaths of these geniuses; after all, geniuses came every three centuries. Their deaths were minor matters. However, when so many Celestial Immortals were gathered together, they naturally hoped that the disciples of their school would be outstanding and earn some face for them from their peers.

But of course...that was just a matter of face.

.....

The thousand Celestial Immortals down below were chatting amongst themselves. Up high, the Xia Emperor and the other eight Pure Yang True Immortals were chatting as well.

“Look there!” Lu Dongbin’s eyes suddenly lit up as he pointed towards a corner of the Diagram. “Look at the black-robed girl being attacked by those three. A black-robed youth appeared next to them. Look, quick! See that look in the black-robed girl’s eyes? That look in her eyes that instantly appeared when she looked at the black-robed youth...bahaha, a gaze that is extremely complicated, as though long-suppressed emotions were instantly unleashed! Although it was only for an instant, I daresay that this black-robed woman must have fallen in love!”

“Fallen in love?” The Xia Emperor, the Bodhisattva of Great Strength, Sovereign Hao, the Immortal Elder of the Northlands...they all were completely speechless.

They had followed Lu Dongbin’s pointing finger to watch, and they had been paying attention to Ning who had exploded with power. Who would’ve thought that Lu Dongbin, however, was paying attention to the look in Yu Wei’s eyes?

“That gaze...ahaha...it was really...not only has this woman fallen in love, I daresay that she’s never confessed it to this black-robed youth

before.” Lu Dongbin swept his gaze across the other True Immortals, then laughed smugly, “Any of you want to bet with me on this?”

The Xia Emperor and the others exchanged glances, all feeling quite resigned.

“Senior apprentice-brother Xiamang, that black-robed youth of yours is rather formidable,” Emperor Hao congratulated.

The Xia Emperor laughed. “The black-robed youth is named Ji Ning. He numbers amongst the few dozen most famous figures participating in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. His Primaltwin has even killed a Loose Immortal.”

“Oh?” The True Immortals present all nodded, but to them, killing a Loose Immortal was an extremely minor matter. They naturally wouldn’t pay too much attention to it. What they cared more about was if any of the many geniuses present at this Conclave would become one of the powerful experts of the Three Realms in the future. And if so...who would it be?

“One of the few dozen most famous? He lives up to the reputation.” The Bodhisattva of Great Strength smiled and praised him.

They actually didn’t feel that Ning was particularly outstanding; after all, in the past five days of the Conclave, quite a few members of the hundred thousand-plus competitors had revealed astonishing levels of power. They were all Wanxiang Adepts, but had been capable of exploding forth with power comparable to an ordinary Loose Immortal’s... and in fact, there were two Wanxiang Adept monsters who had comprehended five complete Dao-Paths.

Comprehended five Dao-Paths? Even this wasn’t enough to shock the Pure Yang True Immortals present.

This was because they felt that it wasn’t too shocking for some peerless geniuses to have mastered five complete Dao-Paths after having spent three hundred years at the Wanxiang level, all for the purpose of surprising everyone at this Conclave.

Pure Yang True Immortals like them...they were major figures of the Three Realms, and so naturally their vision was quite broad. If one looked at the Three Realms as a whole, it was indeed not rare for competitors with five mastered Dao-Paths to appear at the Conclave.

"That little lass is quite interesting, quite interesting." Lu Dongbin was rather intrigued now, and he laughed in a self-congratulating manner, "Yep...that black-robed maiden's been hiding her feelings all along. I wonder when she will voice them?"

The nearby Xia Emperor and the others just pretended not to hear anything.

Everyone knew that what Lu Dongbin loved to do was play matchmaker. This was one of his favorite hobbies, and in fact, stories about him playing matchmaker were extremely common throughout the Three Realms. They could tell that Lu Dongbin was feeling the impulse to do so once more. He might add a bit of 'spice' into the relationship between the black-robed maiden and the black-robed youth.

.....

Ninelotus sat in the lotus position behind the Dongyan Forefather. Her head had been raised this entire time as she stared at the Diagram. She was mainly paying attention to the six disciples sent by the Dongyan clan and the three from the Black-White College...but of course, she paid the most attention to Ji Ning!

"Not good. Senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei is in danger." A look of worry appeared on Ninelotus' face as her hands clenched around her robes.

"Ji Ning. Ji Ning is nearby.. Ji Ning, hurry up and notice it, hurry!" Ninelotus hoped it would happen.

And indeed, just as she had hoped, Ning had sensed the ripples from the battle. He had immediately moved in that direction, and had even displayed an astonishing amount of power. All three died, and Ning and Yu Wei were reunited.

“Whew. The danger is past. Senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei is safe.” Ninelotus let out a sigh. “Now, senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei and Ji Ning can move together and support each other. It will be much safer for them.”

Suddenly, Ninelotus’ heart trembled.

It was only natural and normal for Ji Ning and Yu Wei to travel together; they were fellow disciples, after all. It was normal for them to support each other. But Ninelotus suddenly realized...Ji Ning and Yu Wei, a single man and an unmarried woman, would be together for most likely an entire year.

“A single man and an unmarried woman...experiencing life and death together...for nearly a year...” Ninelotus suddenly shook her head gently. “But I no longer have any right to think about such matters.”

Love was a strange thing.

They had clearly already separated, but upon seeing Ji Ning with Yu Wei, she felt as though a stone had just hammered against her heart, causing ripples that would be difficult to calm down.

Chapter 8: The Grand Black Tortoise Divine Ability

Within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers.

“Junior apprentice-brother.” Yu Wei’s emotions and her excitement were all difficult to control right now.

“Senior apprentice-sister, your earlier battle caused quite a stir, and you fought for a long while. Others are definitely lying in wait in this area, and even more are probably on the way.” Ning had no time to talk; with a wave of his hand, he collected the magic treasures and storage treasures of the silver-haired woman and the black-robed man. The talismans were located in the storage treasures; how could he not take them away?

Whoosh.

A ship appeared in front of Ning and Yu Wei. “Senior apprentice-sister, let’s go.” Ning pulled Yu Wei by the hand as he leaped into the ship. The two immediately entered it, and the ship transformed into a streak of light, quickly fleeing. As it fled, Ning spread out his divine sense to sweep the area...and, just as he had expected, quite a few people were present.

“Who was that black-robed youth? How could he be so powerful?”

“Given his power, he should be one of those who was ranked as one of the top hundred prior to the Conclave beginning. He seems rather similar to that Ji Ning, mentioned in the reports of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain. He uses twin swords, is very powerful in close combat, and is skilled in lotus techniques. Given the level of his power...it should probably be Ji Ning. However, Ji Ning is usually dressed in furs, whereas that youth was dressed in black robes. It seems that even Ji Ning doesn’t dare to be too bold and brash.”

“Right. Anyone would recognize him in furs. In black robes...one would have to carefully inspect him.”

“The top hundred experts of the Conclave truly are formidable. In single combat in close quarters against this Ji Ning, when he activates all his

divine abilities...he can probably kill me in just one exchange of blows."

"Gotta be careful."

All of them quickly and secretly departed. Ning had fled quite fast. In addition, without enough people joining forces, they didn't dare to try and antagonize Ning.

.....

Whoosh.

The ship flew thousands of kilometers, then hide within a large mountain. Ning put away the flying treasure, then let out a sigh of relief alongside Yu Wei.

Ning said with a laugh, "Senior apprentice-sister, earlier when we were fighting, there were eight figures within ten kilometers who were watching us, and nearly two hundred people within a thousand kilometers were pressing near. In this Diagram, even if you get into a fight, you can't continue to fight for too long. Otherwise, the disturbance will definitely attract attention from others. You have to resolve any fights quickly."

"Of course I know that, but I was trapped by them and wasn't able to even flee," Yu Wei said helplessly. "I was just about to throw out my talismans and prepare to escape."

His senior apprentice-sister definitely was a supremely beautiful woman in terms of appearances. This look of helplessness on her face couldn't help but cause Ning's heart to tremble slightly, but then he quickly calmed himself.

"Senior apprentice-sister, earlier you used phoenixes of ice and fire," Ning said with a sighing laugh. "I have yet to congratulate you on mastering yet another complete Dao-Path."

Three years ago, she had already mastered the Dao of the Freeze, but that was but a single Dao-Path.

"You all call me the Rainbowflame Fairy, right?" Yu Wei laughed softly. "I was more talented in fire to begin with. Thanks to a stroke of luck, I

first mastered the Dao of the Freeze. My Dao of the Inferno was just a small step behind that.”

Ning nodded. He, too, felt as though he was about to make a breakthrough in the Dao of the Inferno...but he continued to be just a hair away from actually accomplishing it.

“Later on, I’ll need to ask you to help guide me on the Dao of the Inferno, senior apprentice-sister,” Ning said.

“A minor matter.” Yu Wei naturally was happy to help teach him.

“Right, senior apprentice-sister. This is the storage treasure of the silver-haired woman. Help me bind it. I’ll bind the other one’s storage treasure. The talismans are all inside.” Ning handed a bracelet to Yu Wei.

“You go ahead and slowly bind it yourself,” Yu Wei said, looking at Ning. “If I bound it, you definitely wouldn’t accept the talismans inside. Don’t try to trick me.”

Ning was flabbergasted. Yu Wei was truly quite meticulous and intelligent. Ning felt that he was a smart man, but compared to her, he was still a bit inferior. For example, just now; all he had done was ask her to help bind the storage-type bracelet, and she had immediately been able to infer that in reality, he was giving the talismans within to her.

“You killed both of those two. The talismans belong to you. How about we split them?” Ning said.

“You saved my life, and when I killed them, they were in a dazed state because of you.” Yu Wei shook her head. “Enough. In the future, we are going to continue to adventure in this Diagram. In the future, whoever makes the kill will get the items, but this time, since you saved my life, the talismans should be yours.”

Ning had no choice but to nod.

Seeing how Ning was behaving, Yu Wei felt quite happy, and the corner of her lips couldn’t help but curve upwards.

“Let’s go. Senior apprentice-sister, you battled for a long time earlier;

you need to first restore your elemental ki and also calm your mind.” Ning immediately led Yu Wei to quickly find a cave to hide in.

Time flowed on. The days passed, one by one.

Together, Ji Ning and Yu Wei truly were much more formidable.

Yu Wei had mastered two complete Dao-Paths, and was able to combine fire and water together. Her phoenixes of ice and fire were indeed incredibly powerful, and in terms of defense alone, the ice phoenix was comparable to Ning’s Waterflame Lotus! This was the reason why Yu Wei had been able to hold on for so long against the attacks of those three. In terms of offense, the fire phoenix was quite astonishing as well.

With each other’s support, even if ten or so people attacked them at once, they would still have a chance at winning.

.....

“Yu Wei truly is extraordinary; she has comprehended two entire Dao-Paths.” Immortal Fivecraze was quite delighted with the performance of these two disciples of the Black-White College. He often bragged about them to the nearby members of other major powers of Stillwater Commandery. “Ji Ning is even more formidable! One of the 96 positions will definitely go to our Black-White College. And the eldest disciple of the third generation; little Sloppy has yet to show his power.”

“Ji Ning is formidable, but I really don’t see anything remarkable about that the Sloppy Daoist of your Black-White College.” A white-haired Loose Immortal of the Skysplitter Sword Sect shook his head and sneered, clearly unhappy at how smug Immortal Fivecraze was acting.

“You are just jealous!” Immortal Fivecraze stared at him.

.....

The Conclave had been going on for more than a month. The Sloppy Daoist was reclining lazily within a cave. Next to him was a pool of water that was both clear and refreshing.

“The first three months will be the craziest. I’ll relax for three months.

Those who survive to the end will all be formidable, and will definitely have many talismans on them. Fighting will only be fun by that point.” The Sloppy Daoist just lay there, producing a large cooked rib and beginning to gnaw on it, covering his mouth in oil.

Suddenly...

Whoosh!

A wind blew past, and eight figures suddenly appeared at the entrance to the cave. One of the eight, a muscular man, said with a laugh, “Eldest apprentice-brother, let’s take a break at this cave and bind the storage treasures we just acquired. I hope there are talismans inside—” But suddenly, the muscular man stared.

The other seven also stared, flabbergasted, at the sloppy, chubby man lying down in the cave and gnawing on a roast rib.

The world of the Diagram was clearly quite large; the chances of encountering someone in a cave they randomly selected was very low. For the Sloppy Daoist, despite having often hidden in this cave during the past month, this was his first time encountering someone at the entrance.

“If you always walk by the side of the river, eventually your shoes will get wet.” The Sloppy Daoist resignedly stood up and muttered to himself, then said with a chortle, “Everyone, I’m resting here. Why don’t you leave? Or perhaps I shall leave?”

“Little sloppy kid, are you playing dumb or actually dumb?” A youth with triangle pupils said coldly, “Be good and hand your talisman over and we can spare your life. Otherwise, don’t blame me for showing no mercy.”

“Nope.” The Sloppy Daoist shook his head.

“Don’t waste words with him. Attack!” the leader, a youth holding a feather fan, let out a cold laugh and then immediately waved his hand. Feathers instantly began to shoot out from the feather fan in his hands, and hundreds of feathers instantly formed into an enormous Immortal crane. The Immortal crane screeched as it sent its claws tearing towards

the Sloppy Daoist, and the surrounding rocky walls of the cave were beginning to shatter from the force of the attack.

“Die.” The muscular man let out an angry roar, then immediately expanded in size to thirty-six meters. Because they were in a cave, he had to squat down and lower his head. He also suddenly activated the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability, and in each hand he wielded an enormous greataxe.

He transformed into a streak of lightning, charging forward.

Each of the eight released their own techniques.

Three were Fiendgod Body Refiners, while the others were Ki Refiners. Each had secret arts of their own, and the ‘Immortal Crane of the Nine Heavens’ technique of their leader, the fan-wielding youth, wasn’t that much weaker than even the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. However, although the technique was fine, the power a technique could actually unleash depended on the user. For example, when Ning used the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], it was even more powerful and dazzling than when the Thousand Swords Immortal had used it back when he himself had been at the peak Wanxiang level.

These eight all came from an extremely large clan from the Eastern Seas known as the ‘Myriad Beasts School’. This was ranked as one of the most supreme of schools in the entire Grand Xia Dynasty, and it was ranked several tiers higher than the Black-White College. It had hundreds of Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals! Naturally, all eight were extremely powerful.

Rumble...

The battle began. Rocks began to fly everywhere, and the mountain peak itself began to crumble.

BOOM!

Within the crumbling mountain peak, the illusion of an enormous Turtle-Snake suddenly appeared. A powerful aura that filled the heavens swept out from it. A chubby youth with the eyes of a snake and whose

skin was covered with tattoos that looked like the shell of a turtle was there...and with his bare hands, he smashed aside a giant, blood-red seal, then slapped a terrified white-robed youth into dust with a single palm blow. Next, his hand formed into a claw, striking forward like the beak of a crow and piercing directly through the head of one of the Fiendgod Refiner men. Then, with a swiping movement, he completely tore the Fiendgod Refiner's body apart.

Whooooosh. The enormous illusion of the Turtle-Snake quickly ground apart the body of the Fiendgod Refiner, quickly transforming it into ash.

“Quick, run!”

“My lord...”

“How can he be this powerful?! The records of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain regarding the most powerful participants made no mention at all of this sloppy-looking fatty!”

The geniuses of the Myriad Beasts School had completely collapsed. They all threw out their talismans, but in total six of them still ended up being killed by the sloppy-looking fatty. Only two of them just barely managed to escape with their lives.

“Whew.” The Sloppy Daoist stood there atop the destroyed mountain. Waving his hand, he collected up all the talismans and storage treasures. He was completely back to normal, and no longer seemed as terrifying as he had before.

“I didn’t want to fight in the first three months, but they actually forced me to unleash my grand divine ability.” The Sloppy Daoist shook his head. “The participants of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny truly are extraordinary. The attacks of just eight of them were enough to force me to use my grand divine ability. I imagine that many others are going to quickly arrived. I’d best leave.”

Whoosh.

With a single step, the Sloppy Daoist transformed into a gust of wind and disappeared.

.....

The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

The faces of the Xia Emperor, Lu Dongbin, the Immortal Elder of the Northlands, and the rest of the nine had all changed. Although it didn't appear as though they were paying much attention to the Diagram, since they were Pure Yang True Immortals, they actually saw everything which was going on within it.

"The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability."

"Grand Emperor Xuanwu!" 1

"He's actually a successor for Grand Emperor Xuanwu. I wonder if he is a personal apprentice or just an honorary apprentice."

They all had solemn looks on their faces now. Grand Emperor Xuanwu... he was one of the major powers of the Three Realms, and an extremely terrifying figure.

"The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability...it is definitely ranked as one of the top hundred divine ability of the countless divine abilities created since the universe was established." Lu Dongbing spoke with a serious look on his face. "I didn't imagine that here, at the Conclave of Immortal Destiny of your Grand Xia Empire, I'd be able to see one of the most supreme divine abilities of the Three Realms!"

*

1. As noted previously, Xuanwu, literally 'dark warrior', is both the name of an Immortal as well as the Black Tortoise of the Four Beasts. There are many legends regarding the both, and often the legends are linked, such as the Black Tortoise/Turtle-Snake originally being the guts and intestines of Xuanwu.

Chapter 9: Repeated Breakthroughs

The Xia Emperor, Sovereign Hao, and the rest of the nine Pure Yang True Immortals were all staring at the distant, massive Diagram which hung in the skies. They stared at that sloppy-looking, chubby youth. Without question, this divine technique, the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, absolutely was not something that could be recorded down in a book. It had to be transmitted through very special methods, and it had to be Grand Emperor Xuanwu himself who did the transmitting!

“Someone who was approved of by Grand Emperor Xuanwu...he cannot be a simple figure.” The Immortal Elder of the Northlands chortled. “Xiamang, who is this youth? Where is he from?”

The others all looked towards the Xia Emperor as well.

The Xia Emperor knew the details of every single one of the hundred thousand-plus attendees to this Conclave. Not trying to hide anything, he said, “This youth is a disciple of the Black-White College, which hails from the Stillwater Commandery of my Grand Xia Dynasty. His name is Zhang Qi, and his Daoist title is ‘Threefat’, but because he’s always dressed so sloppily, there are very few people in the outside world who refer to him as Adept Threefat. The majority refer to him as the Sloppy Daoist.”

“The Sloppy Daoist? His Daoist title is ‘Threefat’? This young fellow is quite amusing.” Lu Dongbin laughed. “He actually picked such a casual Daoist title. It seems as though this youth who Grand Emperor Xuanwu took a liking to really does have unusual points about him.”

“Grand Emperor Xuanwu is so majestic, and yet he actually chose such a sloppy young fellow as his disciple.”

“The Sloppy Daoist?”

They all memorized this name.

Even if this fat youth was currently nothing more than an honorary disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu, after he became a Celestial

Immortal, he would most likely become a personal disciple! For him to have been taught the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, even when he was so young and weak, was testament to how much Grand Emperor Xuanwu liked him. For a major power to care about him so much...his future would definitely be extraordinary.”

Pure Yang True Immortals had incredibly good high standards. The number of Celestial Immortals that would arise from these hundred thousand-plus geniuses could be counted on one hand, and they actually didn’t care about them too much. However, the Sloppy Daoist’s status as the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu was definitely enough to make them pay serious attention to him.

.....

“The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability?” The Dongyan Forefather revealed a look of astonishment. “This, this Conclave actually has a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu?”

“The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability!” A stunned look was on Patriarch Arcanum’s face as well. “This sloppily-dressed youth...who is he?! Our Grand Xia world actually has someone capable of becoming a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu?!”

The thousand Celestial Immortals had often journeyed to other worlds as well, and some had even gone to the Deva Realm. Thus, they were fairly experienced. In addition, the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability was an extremely recognizable one; upon seeing the massive illusion of the Turtle-Snake, and upon seeing the turtle shell-like tattoos that had suddenly emerged on the Sloppy Daoist’s skin, there was no question in their minds at all that this was the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability. More than 80% of the nearly one thousand Celestial Immortals present all recognized it.

And they were all amazed!

The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability...it meant that this person was the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu! Grand Emperor Xuanwu was one of the hegemons of the entire Three Realms. He had been a hegemon ever

since the Primordial Era, and was absolutely one of the most major of powers! Celestial Immortals like them dreamed about being able to become a personal disciple of such a major power...but alas, the vast majority of them would only be permitted to become honorary disciples at best.

There was a huge difference between honorary disciples and personal disciples. Personal disciples...to be one meant that the major power would use all of his effort in training you.

Honorary disciples, by contrast, were just honorary; you'd be qualified to go listen to the major power expound on the Dao, but it would be hard to even speak a single word to that major power in private!

Celestial Immortals were carefree Immortals who had escaped the restrictions of the Three Realms, and were able to dominate a local region. Major powers needed servants to take care of matters for them, which was why they give appropriate Celestial Immortals a status of being 'honorary disciples'.

But the Sloppy Daoist was different. He had been taught the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability when he was merely a Wanxiang Adept. His treatment was absolutely on par with a personal disciple's treatment! Even though he was currently just an honorary disciple, that was merely because he was currently too weak; after becoming a Celestial Immortal, he would be immediately promoted to personal disciple.

.....

The plaza below.

"The Patriarch has ordered us to immediately investigate who that sloppy-looking fatty is." An azure Flood Dragon that had shrunken in size and was coiling in midair stretched out a claw, pointing towards a spot in the sky.

"We'll investigate right away."

.....

"The Supreme One has ordered us to investigate that sloppy-looking

fatty.”

.....

Celestial Immortals were on too high of a level, and so they knew very little about the geniuses in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. The Sloppy Daoist, at least, was someone which almost none of them recognized. They didn’t dare to spread out their coresense; after all, the Xia Emperor and eight other Pure Yang True Immortals were right next to him. All they could do was just to send orders to their subordinates.

More than half of the major powers of the 3600 commanderies and four seas immediately began to investigate.

Soon, they discovered...that this person was named Zhang Qi, his Daoist title was Threefat, and that most referred to him as the Sloppy Daoist. He was a disciple of the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery!

“Stillwater Commandery...the Black-White College?”

“Black-White College?”

“A small school like that actually produced a disciple that Grand Emperor Xuanwu cares about?”

The Celestial Immortals located in the main hall of the Skylight Palace all quickly received this information. They were all completely puzzled... but in their hearts, they already viewed the Sloppy Daoist as someone with status equal to theirs. The mere fact that he was someone whom Grand Emperor Xuanwu cared about was more than enough for him to be treated as an equal.

The leader of the Black-White College delegation, Immortal Fivecrazed, couldn’t help but laugh delightedly as he saw all this. “I always did say that little Sloppy is extremely formidable. I understood his Dao-heart long ago...and I’ve always said that not even the Earth Immortals or Loose Immortals of the Black-White College are comparable to him in terms of his Dao-heart. He truly is formidable! But what divine ability is that? Not even I have ever seen it. It seems fairly powerful though; little Sloppy must’ve had a very lucky encounter.”

“Heh heh heh...given how formidable little Sloppy is, perhaps in this Conclave...he’ll be accepted by one of the powerful Celestial Immortals or Pure Yang True Immortals of the Three Realms as a disciple.” Immortal Fivecraze was daydreaming beautifully right now.

.....

Time flowed on. More than a month had already passed.

The battles raging within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers were exceptionally agonizing, because everyone understood that they were all fighting over their Immortal destiny.

However, in the eyes of the exalted Xia Emperor and the other eight True Immortals, aside from the Sloppy Daoist, who had caused them to sigh in amazement...these other geniuses could at most cause their eyes to briefly light up. In addition, it was already quite rare for a disciple of a major power to appear in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny of a major world; they didn’t believe a second would emerge!

Rumble....

Within the world of the Diagram. A waterfall cascaded down like a white torrent, smashing against a pool and spraying water everywhere.

Next to the pool, there was a violet-robed, thick-browed, large-eyed, massively built youth. He was seated in the lotus position. Not too far away from him another youth, also in the lotus position; this youth had a head of tousled, unruly hair, and looked almost like a barbarian. His gaze was like that of one of the eagles in the sky, filled with a savagery that could cause the heart to quiver.

“Xiamang Zishan, are you done rest? It’s time for us to go. We don’t have enough talismans yet!” 1

“Hey, I’m talking to you!” The wild-haired barbarian youth began to get angry. But right at this moment...

Arcane ripples of power suddenly began to descend around the massively built violet-robed youth. These were the ripples of the Dao. Water and mist began to swirl around him, and in the midst of the water

and mist could be seen flashes of lightning.

“...the hell? You made a breakthrough, just like that?” The barbarian youth was speechless.

The violet-robed youth slowly opened his eyes. If the barbarian youth could be described as an eagle of the heavens, then this violet-robed youth was like a primordial behemoth of the group, filled with an absolutely dominating aura. In terms of dominating auras, even the father of Northmont Baiwei, ‘Northmont Blacktiger’, was a level inferior to him.

“Cangwu Jiu.” 2 The azure-robed youth cracked a smile, revealing his white teeth. “I’ve mastered a fourth Dao-Path as well! I’ve caught up to you!”

“Before this, you and I were on par...and now, you punk, you are even more powerful than me?” Cangwu Jiu was amazed.

The two of them had run into each other shortly after entering this Diagram world. They had fought together, then realized neither could achieve victory of the other. Given that they had also grown up together in the imperial capital, and felt friendly towards each other to begin with...and that as soon as they had entered the Diagram world, they had both suffered repeated group attacks...they decided to join forces!

“You run too fast. If you focus on avoiding taking on my attacks head-on, there’s nothing I can do to you either.” A look of confidence was in Xiamang Zishan’s eyes. “But if you actually fight against me head-on...you naturally are no longer my match. With four Dao-Paths which have been infused into my Grand Dao of Lightning...I imagine that in this entire Diagram world, if I said that I was number two, no one would dare claim themselves to be number one!”

“Don’t go too crazy,” Cangwu Jiu sneered. “And don’t be smug. There are countless geniuses in the Diagram, and given how many times they are battling every day...these battles are tempering them and allowing them to improve at an astonishing rate. Quite a few people are most likely making breakthroughs!”

“Mm. That’s something I do need to be careful about.” Xiamang Zishan

nodded. "I can't be too overconfident. My goal in this Conclave is to come out number one!"

Cangwu Jiu shook his head. "Let's hurry up and go."

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu both flew off.

.....

The Sloppy Daoist was standing by the side of a lake. Underneath the light of the moon, it appeared illusory and dreamy. His eyes were closed. He had no idea that in the outside world, nine True Immortals and many Celestial Immortals were all focusing on him, and that he was the largest focal point for the entire Diagram right now.

"whew."

The Sloppy Daoist's body suddenly trembled slightly, and then a swirl of fire erupted in the surrounding area, billowing outwards. One circle of fire after another spread out, with the Sloppy Daoist at the center. The ripples of the Dao descended.

The Sloppy Daoist opened his eyes. "After training for all these years, and after fighting tens of times every day in the Diagram world...I've finally made a break through in the fourth month and mastered my third complete Dao-Path. What I need to do now is to fuse all three of these complete Daos into my Grand Dao of Taiji." 3

The Sloppy Daoist had also gained insight into a Grand Dao.

Ji Ning had gained insight into the Grand Dao of the Sword, while the Sloppy Daoist had embarked on the path of the Grand Dao of the Taiji.

.....

After a few months, many of those who had been present in the Diagram had given up...and many of them had perished within it! But for the surviving geniuses? It was normally incredibly rare for them to be able to encounter geniuses on their same general level and fight with them...and now that they were doing so for tens of times or even

hundred times each day, many of them began to make sudden breakthroughs.

Many of them had been trapped at bottlenecks, and now, they were all making their breakthroughs.

The sixth month of the trials within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers.

Within a wilderness region. A black-robed youth and a black-robed woman were within the wild grass of this area.

Ning sat there in the lotus position, and not too far away was Yu Wei. Yu Wei was also seated in the lotus position, quietly looking at Ning. Earlier, Ning had said to her: "Senior apprentice-sister, I gained some insights in that previous battle. Help stand guard for me." And then, he had set down a simple vision-obscuring formation, then closed his eyes and entered a meditative state.

Yu Wei looked at Ning, whose eyes were still closed. She carefully looked at his eyes, his nose, his lips...she looked at him very carefully and very earnestly.

*

1. Zishan means 'Violet Mountain', which goes with his preference for violet clothes.
2. 'Jiu' means hawk, hence the description of him as looking like an eagle.
3. This is the same Taiji as the Taiji Diagram, aka the Yin-Yang diagram, or in 'Tai Chi' martial arts. The concept of the Taiji is one of the most fundamental ones in Daoism.

Chapter 10: The Most Powerful Two-Man Squad

Yu Wei rested her hands on her chin, just looking at Ji Ning. In fact, an unconscious smile even crept onto her face.

It was very quiet.

They were underneath the light of the moon. The only people present were herself and her junior apprentice-brother. She just gazed at her junior apprentice-brother...and everything seemed so perfect.

.....

The plaza of the imperial citadel.

“Whaaaaaat?” Mu Northson stared at the image of Ji Ning and Yu Wei within the Diagram in the skies. Yu Wei sat there, resting her hands on her chin and staring intently at Ning. “Can it be that senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei has fallen for senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning? Good heavens!”

Little Qing, wrapped around Northson’s arm, was staring intently as well.

Just from the look on Yu Wei’s face, anyone with the slightest bit of intelligence would be able to guess that Yu Wei harbored feelings for Ji Ning.

“That little girl Yu Wei and Ji Ning...?” Immortal Fivecraze revealed a grin. As he saw it, since both Yu Wei and Ji Ning were peerless geniuses of the Black-White College, they were quite a match for each other.

.....

“Look look, look look look, that expression on that little girl’s face! I told you, I told you all! I told you that this little girl must be in love with that Ji Ning fellow.” Lu Dongbin urgently pointed at a corner of the massive Diagram while saying to the nearby Xia Emperor, Sovereign Hao, and others, “I wanted to bet with you earlier, but none of you were willing.”

“You are the Sage of Love, a legendary matchmaker, the Moon Elder... who would dare bet against you in such a matter?” A Pure Yang True Immortal dressed in black Daoist robes that had a blood-colored Taiji diagram embroidered onto them laughed. 1

“Truelord, I’m no sage of love; I don’t even have a Dao-companion. I’m definitely not the Moon Elder either; the Celestial Court already has a designated Moon Elder,” Lu Dongbin said hurriedly.

Buffoonery and jests; shamelessness and thick-skinnedness; a master of pretense.

In short, any place with Lu Dongbin in it would be a place of laughter. This was why Lu Dongbin had so many friends in the Three Realms. He was an incredibly good-natured fellow, had powerful backers supporting him, and was very strong in his own right. How could he not have countless friends?

.....

Ninelotus, seated behind the Dongyan Forefather, tightly grasped at her robes as she stared at the massive Diagram. She chewed on her lips, a complicated look in her eyes. “Senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei...towards Ji Ning, you...”

In the past, she had only been a bit worried. Although over the past few months, Ji Ning and Yu Wei had grown fairly close as they had adventured together, Ninelotus had chalked that up to being because they were fellow disciples of the same school. But upon seeing that look...she had no more doubts at all!

“I’ve made my choice.”

“No regrets.”

Ninelotus bit her lips, lecturing herself mentally.

Yu Wei just gazed at Ning, completely absorbed in her own little world. She completely forgot that there even was an outside world.

After an indeterminable period of time, tendrils of flame began to

emerge around Ning, which grew and expanded into an lotus flower that began to continuously expand, from a fist-sized lotus flower to an enormous flaming lotus that was many tens of meters long. Ning sat there in the very center of the lotus amidst the pistils as the ripples of the Dao descended.

“Eh?” Yu Wei suddenly came to her senses.

“Not good!” She suddenly felt shocked. “Those in the outside world can see everything that’s going on within this Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers! Someone might’ve noticed me!”

She had only revealed her emotions and ceased disguising them when she had seen that Ning had been completely absorbed in meditating on the Dao. She had forgotten that others outside could see her! This caused Yu Wei to feel incredibly awkward and embarrassed.

“Senior apprentice-sister.” Ning opened his eyes, then said with a laugh, “I’ve broken through the bottleneck. I’ve finally mastered the Dao of the Inferno.”

Yu Wei hurriedly came back to her senses, then said happily, “That’s wonderful. Junior apprentice-brother, you’ve already mastered the Dao of Rainwater. Now that you’ve mastered the Dao of the Inferno as well...with fire and water joining together and then infusing your Dao of the Sword, your power must have grown significantly.”

“Yes.” Ning nodded, filled with anticipation as well.

Two complete Dao-Paths. He had also reached the Grand Dao Domain in the Dao of the Sword. He now felt even more confident in his chances. Although some of the most supreme geniuses amongst these hundred thousand-plus competitors in the Conclave might have already started training in their own Grand Daos, some had just a basic grasp while others had just gotten to understand their own hearts. Only a very few would have reached the Grand Dao Domain like Ning.

“Junior apprentice-brother, you need to seize the chance to train in your [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens],” Yu Wei immediately said. “You are only at the eleventh stage. There are many practitioners of

the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] in this Conclave, and most of them have reached the twelfth stage.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded. This was his weakness. In Swallow Mountain, countless years would pass before there would a genius capable of training in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], but in Stillwater Commandery, the Black-White College alone had quite a few. As for the participants in this Conclave, many of them trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. To be at the eleventh stage of it was indeed a bit weak.

However, he had a powerful soul and was a Sword Immortal, and also had the [Starseizing Hand]. He didn’t fear fighting against any of them.

.....

Just half a month after Ning had mastered the Dao of the Inferno.

A massively built violet-robed youth and a barbarian youth were walking shoulder-to-shoulder amidst the mountain forests, sweeping out with their divine sense to a distance of ten kilometers.

“Cangwu Jiu, how many talismans do you have?” Xiamang Zishan asked.

“Just barely over a thousand. You?” Cangwu Jiu asked.

“You have more than a thousand already? I’ve killed even more people than you, but I only have 989!” Xiaman Zishan stared at him.

“That’s because you are stupid. Will you necessarily acquire a lot of talismans just by killing a lot of people? Some people had many on them; some had less. It comes down to being a matter of judgment...and clearly, your judgment is vastly inferior to mine,” Cangwu Jiu said disdainfully.

Xiamang Zishan shook his head. “You don’t have THAT many more than me. Look at how smug you are acting! We’ve spent more than six months in the Diagram; more than half a year has passed. We need to speed it up and acquire at least 1300 each.”

The Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers had a total of

109,362 competitors within it.

After a year, the eighty contestants with the most talismans would have passed the trials. Thus, so long as they acquired at least 1370 talismans, it was guaranteed that you would have passed. And given that some would have more and others less, while some of the losers would also have talismans...1300 was probably going to be enough.

“We have to aim for 1400! Only then can I be at ease,” Cangwu Jiu said.

While chatting, the two continued to sweep their divine sense forward. Whoosh! They continued to advance rapidly forward.

“Eh?” Cangwu Jiu and Xiamang Zishan’s eyes suddenly flickered. Swoosh! Swoosh! The two transformed into streaks of light, instantly charging forward by many kilometers. Many kilometers away, halfway up a tall mountain peak, there stood a black-robed man and a woman. It was Ning and Yu Wei.

Ning and Yu Wei both had powerful souls as well; when the enemy swept them with their divine sense, they both immediately noticed it. A moment later, two figures appeared in the distance.

“Them?” Ning and Yu Wei were both shocked. They immediately recognized the two, because these two were simply far too famous. And, more importantly, the two hadn’t changed their clothes at all.

“Xiamang Zishan? Cangwu Jiu?” Ning’s heart clenched. According to the reports from the Heavenly Treasures Mountain regarding the peerless geniuses participating in this Conclave, the number one ranked figure was Xiamang Zishan, while the number two was Cangwu Jiu!

Xiamang Zishan trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], and also trained in my divine abilities that were used only by the imperial Xiamang clan and were not taught to outsiders! His talent was absolutely top-notch as well, and the Grand Xia Emperor was quite pleased with him. Supposedly, he had long ago been guided by the Grand Xia Emperor into the tutelage of one of the experts of the Three Realms, and his power was immeasurable.

Cangwu Jiu was one of the rare, peerless geniuses of the Cangwu clan. His age was comparable to Xiamang Zishan's, and ever since they had been young, they had been famous geniuses of the imperial capital. They had grown up together.

Because Xiamang Zishan was of the imperial clan, he was ranked as number one while Cangwu Jiu was forced to be ranked as number two. But no matter what...without question, these two were the two most famous participants in this Conclave!

“Given how famous they are, they assuredly have the power to back it up. Why have the two most famous figures joined forces?” Ning felt nervousness in his heart. If he encountered one of them, he would dare to fight...but he had Yu Wei with him as well, and she was a Ki Refiner. Although she had mastered two complete Daos, her power was still quite a bit lower than figures like Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu.

.....

“Lu Dongbin, weren’t you paying a great deal of attention to that little girl? This time, that little girl and Ji Ning have really run into trouble,” the Immortal Elder of the Northlands called out with a chortle.

Lu Dongbin was watching. He said vexedly, “This really does seem to be trouble. Those two are named Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu, right? Their power can be considered to be in the absolute top tier of these hundred thousand-plus competitors. Even compared to the Sloppy Daoist, they would still probably be on par. You can’t say for certain who is stronger until they actually fight, but...Ji Ning and the little girl are a bit too weak.”

“Zishan is the most outstanding member in the junior generation of my Xiamang clan, and has a chance to rank in the top three this time.” The Xia Emperor laughed as he spoke. It was rare for him to care about someone from the younger generation, but Xiamang Zishan was the one he liked the most.

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“Senior apprentice-sister, Ji Ning.” Ninelotus watched nervously. She

knew how frightening Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu were. Earlier, when she had watched as Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu had been headed in the direction of Ning and Yu Wei, she had begun to feel nervous. And in the end...they really did encounter each other.

“I hope nothing bad happens.” Ninelotus was extremely nervous.

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Within the world of the Diagram.

The friends and family outside were worried, but there was nothing they could do. Ning and Yu Wei were now both very cautious as well.

“You are...Ji Ning?” Cangwu Jiu’s hawk-like eyes stared at Ning, immediately recognizing him.

“He’s Ji Ning? Doesn’t Ji Ning dress in furs?” The nearby Xiamang Zishan said.

“I told you that you are an idiot, but you wouldn’t listen. Can’t you just change your damn robes?” Cangwu Jiu shook his head. “I acquired quite a few paintings of Ji Ning. I collected many paintings of all the geniuses. Just by looking at a single one, it can be hard to recognize the real person, which is why I had to view many of them.”

“I have more than a hundred paintings of Ji Ning, so I recognized him at one glance,” Cangwu Jiu said confidently.

Ning and Yu Wei exchanged a glance.

From the way the two were chatting to each other and from how calm they were, it was clear that they were very confident.

“Senior apprentice-sister, don’t fight them head on. Use your phoenixes to attack them, while I’ll tie them up for a while. You flee first, then I’ll come afterwards,” Ning sent. Yu Wei nodded as well. She knew that if it weren’t for her, it would be much easier for Ning to flee, but with her here...although their attack power was greater, fleeing became trickier.

As Ning and Yu Wei were chatting mentally...

“Hand over your talismans, and I’ll spare your lives!” Cangwu Jiu’s voice

suddenly turned sharp, and his mental message echoed in Ning and Yu Wei's minds. Cangwu Jiu charged forward, and suddenly in midair a massive black vulture that was three hundred meters long suddenly appeared. The plumes of the black vulture glowed with an oily light, and its eyes seemed almost alive as it dove forward with a screech.

*

1. In Chinese Daoist religions, a minor divinity known as the 'Moon Elder' is responsible for marriages and matchmaking, much like Cupid is in Western mythologies.

Chapter 11: Ji Ning Battles Xiamang Zishan

“That’s the Venomous Nethervulture secret art!” Ning immediately recognized the technique. Cangwu Jiu had become famous long ago, and this Venomous Nethervulture art was his signature technique. It was an enormous Venomous Nethervulture that was formed from many magic treasures in a formation. As for Cangwu Jiu himself, he was hidden within the grand Venomous Nethervulture. Once it failed, Cangwu Jiu would emerge from within the body of the Nethervulture and enter close combat!

Yu Wei pointed towards the distant. Whoosh! All 72 Rahu Godneedles instantly appeared in midair. Filled with elemental ki, they activated the natural energy of the world to form a pair of enormous phoenixes of fire and ice. The two phoenixes simultaneously howled through the air as they charged towards the giant black vulture.

“Shkreee!” The black vulture let out a venomous screech, then slashed downwards viciously with his claws.

The phoenix of ice and the phoenix of ice charged upwards, but after exchanging just two blows many cracks had already appeared on their bodies. Upon their third collision against the vulture, both phoenixes completely shattered, and the 72 Rahu Godneedles were immediately knocked flying back as well.

“Arise.” Ning stood there, and around him manifested the Waterflame Lotus. The Waterflame Lotus surrounded him, the lotus leaves swaying gently as they continuously swiveled.

Boom...

The charging black vulture smashed directly against the Waterflame Lotus. There was an enormous collision sound, but although some of the leaves of the Waterflame Lotus shattered, new ones quickly emerged. Clearly, this technique was incomparably resilient. This caused the relaxing, spectating Xiamang Zishan to feel startled; this was rather beyond his expectations.

After six months of tempering and especially after having thoroughly mastered both the Dao of Rainwater and the Dao of the Inferno, Ning had further perfected his Waterflame Lotus, as his powers were now in perfect equilibrium, allowing the technique to clearly grow more formidable. In addition, this was a technique which used earthfire and dire-ice of the first grade as its base; how could it be so easily defeated?

“Quick, leave.” Ning sent mentally.

Swoosh! Yu Wei transformed into a streak of light, immediately planning to fly away.

“Shkreee!” The venomous black vulture suddenly opened its mouth, and a person emerged from within it. It was Cangwu Jiu. Cangwu Jiu was wielding a scimitar in his hand, and as he flew out, his body suddenly exploded in size to become sixty meters tall. His right arm transformed into a golden color, and with a single flash, he caught up to the location in front of Yu Wei, frightening her into hurriedly retreating.

“Go!” Ning suddenly manifested more than seven hundred flying swords around him. A golden flying sword appeared in front of him, then shot out with a bang.

Boom! The power of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] caused even Cangwu Jiu’s body to tremble for a moment, but in the next moment, the golden right arm of Cangwu Jiu brandished that scimitar and chopped apart the flying sword of golden light. By this time, Yu Wei had fled back to the Waterflame Lotus.

“He is too fast. I’m not able to escape,” Yu Wei sent frantically.

Ning understood as well. Forget about Yu Wei; even he himself wasn’t confident in being able to escape from the attacks of Cangwu Jiu. Cangwu Jiu’s strongest point was his speed to begin with.

“Then I’ll trap him!” Ning sent. “Senior apprentice-sister, you and I shall first block him off together!”

Swish! Swish! Swish! One golden flying sword after another, formed from the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], flew out and attacked. As

for Yu Wei, the 72 Rahu Godneedles in front of her flew out once more.

The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], the phoenix of ice, and the phoenix of fire simultaneously attacked. Cangwu Jiu, seeing everything headed his way as well as that enormous Waterflame Lotus, couldn't help but frown. He mentally barked, "Xiamang Zishan, why aren't you helping out yet?!"

There was no way Cangwu Jiu could dominate Ning and Yu Wei by himself, after they joined forces.

"It's just two people. I thought you could handle it by yourself." Xiamang Zishan laughed loudly in response. "Cangwu Jiu, remember, don't let these two escape. You are most skilled in pursuing and trapping enemies."

"Don't worry about that!" Cangwu Jiu stood there in midair, pointing towards the distance.

Instantly, a fierce gale arose in the surrounding area, howling as it spun into a tornado. The spinning tornado covered the surrounding area, stretching several kilometers and completely trapping Ning and Yu Wei within it.

"I'll use the Qian-Heaven Soulwind to trap them, the Venomous Nethervulture to support it, and I'll personally be prepared to attack at any time," Cangwu Jiu sent mentally. "Under these three techniques... there's no way they'll escape. As for fighting them head on? I'll leave that to you."

"Hahaha..."

Xiamang Zishan laughed loudly.

Boom!

His footsteps suddenly began to cause the mountains to tremble as he immediately transformed into a sixty meter tall giant, and his entire body began to radiate with a violet-colored lightning. The violet-colored lightning even began to appear in the surrounding area, and an enormous black metal staff appeared in his hands. Wielding the black metal staff,

he charged into the heart of the giant tornado towards the Waterflame Lotus.

Bang!!! He unleashed a single sweeping smash from the black metal staff, but the power of it was so great it seemed capable of reversing the course of rivers. Many of the leaves of the Waterflame Lotus were completely smashed apart into two pieces.

“Such power.” Ning was shocked. Why was the man even more powerful than he had predicted? In the Heavenly Treasures Mountains’ reports, it didn’t seem as though Xiamang Zishan was quite this terrifying. Ning’s Waterflame Lotus wasn’t even able to withstand a single blow from this man.

“Ji Ning, right? Come!” Xiamang Zishan laughed loudly, possessing the aura of a dominating mountain that would crush and destroy anything before it.

Ji Ning suddenly took a step forward as well. Boom! He transformed into a 54 meter tall giant, and lightning crackled around his body as well. In his hands, two Darknorth swords appeared. He charged forward, and as he did a third eye appeared in the middle of his forehead. A succession of lightning bolts slammed out towards the distant Xiamang Zishan...who actually didn’t dodge at all!

The violet lightning crackling around his body was enough to easily deflect Ning’s thunderbolt strikes. As for the divine will component to the attack? He paid even less attention to that.

“[Soldiers of the Mind].”

An invisible, formless surge of divine will shot out, forming into sharp swords, warblades, and longspears. The weapons howled as they flew towards Xiamang Zishan’s sea of consciousness, frantically chopping and stabbing at it.

Xiamang Zishan paused momentarily, but he then quickly regained control over himself. The savagery in his eyes only grew stronger. “So you have some ability after all!”

“You live up to your reputation as the number one expert in the Heavenly Treasures Mountain’s intelligence report.” The enormous Ning charged forward, twin swords in his hands and absolute confidence in his eyes.

“Hahaha...” Xiamang Zishan twirled his black metal staff, his aura of power filling the heavens. Even before his breakthrough, he had been ranked by the Heavenly Treasures Mountain as the number one figure in this crowded. Now that he had made a breakthrough, Xiamang Zishan personally believed that he had no equals left. His goal in this Conclave was to become the number one champion!

The two instantly collided against each other!

A dazzling sword-light filled the skies!

A massive staff shattered apart the Waterflame Lotus with the force of a flood!

BOOM!!!!

Ning took three steps back.

Xiamang Zishan took three steps back as well. The surrounding mountain had begun to crumble, and even the mountain peak was trembling, on the verge of collapse.

“What?!” Cangwu Jiu, in midair, was astonished. “He blocked that madman Xiamang Zishan? This Ji Ning has incredibly terrifying close combat power.”

“What a fellow. You actually managed to receive the third stance of my self-created Qiankun Staff of Force! Have a test of the fourth stance I just created! This is a stance which I created by fusing four complete Dao-Paths into my Grand Dao of Lightning!” Xiamang Zishan was clearly growing even more berserk as he charged towards Ning once more, and the staff in his hands verily surged with flows of violet lightning.

As his staff smashed down, it seemed to tear apart the world itself.

Ning stepped forward to receive the blow, the Darknorth swords in his

hands transforming into dazzling streaks of sword-light as they blocked the terrifying staff.

BOOM!!!!

A heavy collision.

Xiamang Zishan didn't even take a single step back, but Ning was actually forced backwards until his back slammed into the mountain wall behind him. The mountain peak, already trembling and unstable, suddenly began to collapse.

"How can this be?!" Ning's face was completely ashen. In his very first clash against Xiamang Zishan, he had already executed the [Starseizing Hand]. In the first exchange, he had barely managed to fight the man to a standstill, but now that this man had used an even more powerful technique, Ning was now in a position of absolute inferiority.

"His staff techniques are more powerful than my sword techniques." Ning understood the issue. The difference between the two in terms of the Dao was too great. In addition, the enemy had reached the twelfth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], which was more than Ning!

This opponent was of the imperial Xiamang clan. Although the divine abilities he trained in couldn't compare to Ning's [Starseizing Hand], they were still some of the better divine abilities of the Three Realms, and the difference wasn't too staggeringly great.

Rumble...

The mountain peak collapsed, sending rocks flying everywhere.

Ji Ning and Xiamang Zishan stared at each other, completely ignoring the flying rubble. The flying rubble couldn't even strike them; as soon as they came near, the divine power covering their bodies would instantly smash them apart.

"[Three Heads, Six Arms!]" Ning's body suddenly swayed as two new heads and four new arms emerged.

“Haha, me too!” Xiamang Zishan’s body swayed as well, and he too used the [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique. He was now wielding a total of three giant black metal staffs.

“Come.” Ning charged forward, displaying his Windwing Evasion, moving as unpredictably as a ghost as he moved to engage Xiamang Zishan.

Hahaha....” Xiamang Zishan continued to fight him head-on, charging straight for him.

Both of them were using [Three Heads, Six Arms]! Six swords, fighting against three black metal staffs!

Sword-light flowed through the air like streams of running water, incomparably beautiful. A flood of staff-blows filled the skies like bolts of thunder. Ning no longer fought head on; in the past, when he relied on the [Starseizing Hand], he was able to brute-force everything, but upon meeting Xiamang Zishan...he began to instead turn to using the nimbleness inherent to swords, as well as the Windwing Evasion technique. Although with each exchange of blows, Ning was knocked backwards, he wasn’t sent completely flying like earlier.

“I’m going to hit! Hit! Hit hit hit you!!!” Xiamang Zishan was incomparably berserk as his three black metal staffs wildly smashed everywhere.

Ning’s six swords were like an unbroken, overflowing stream of water, blocking and shunting the power of the enemy attacks to the side each time. Every so often, he would even be able to deliver a counterblow with his sword as well.

However, Ning could taste the blood in his mouth. “I can’t continue like this. I have to rescue senior apprentice-sister.”

“[Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]!”

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Instantly, a golden sword coalesced before him, then howled through the air and shot towards Cangwu Jiu. Ning sent frantically, “Senior

apprentice-sister, hurry up and leave.”

BANG! With a powerful staff blow, Xiamang Zishan smashed Ning down into the shattered stones. He roared angrily, “Punk, don’t get distracted. If you get distracted, you’ll die!”

.....

The fight between Xiamang Zishan and Ji Ning had long ago attracted the attention of almost everyone, from the Pure Yang True Immortals and Celestial Immortals to the people on the plaza below the Skylight Palace.

“Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu. The Heavenly Treasures Mountain reported these two as number one and number two.”

“Ji Ning is so formidable; he was actually able to tie down Cangwu Jiu.”

“He’s now fighting against Xiamang Zishan.”

“Xiamang Zishan is so powerful. Ji Ning has actually been able to exchange more than a hundred rounds of attacks with him?” The various delegates from the 3600 and 4 great seas all felt their hearts clench. Many of them were Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals; naturally, they could tell how formidable and fierce Xiamang Zishan’s staff technique was.

This was a staff technique that surpassed the techniques of many Loose Immortals! In addition, Xiamang Zishan’s divine body and divine abilities were clearly incredibly powerful as well. He was an absolutely dominating and irresistible force.

But Ji Ning, a young fellow who had only trained for thirty or so years, was actually able to withstand the attacks. Although he was in a position of inferiority, he was able to rely on the nimbleness of his sword arts to deflect the attacks, and tie down his opponent!

But upon seeing Ji Ning be distracted as he controlled the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to tie down Cangwu Jiu, resulting in Xiamang Zishan heavily injuring him and sending him flying into the rubble, many people instantly felt their hearts clench for Ning.

“Ji Ning is actually allowing himself to be distracted in a life-and-death battle? His opponent is Xiamang Zishan!”

“I hope he doesn’t end up losing his own life for the sake of saving his female companion.”

Many of the people in the plaza of the imperial citadel were discussing the situation amongst themselves.

Mu Northson, Little Qing, the Whitewater Hound, Immortal Fivecraze, Northmont Baiwei, and Ninelotus had begun to feel nervous and worried long ago. But there was nothing they could do; they couldn’t go inside. No one could help Ji Ning. They could just watch as the scene played out before them.

Chapter 12: The Sound of the Flute in the Mountain Cave

Yu Wei, hidden within the Waterflame Lotus while controlling her phoenixes of fire and ice, watched as the three-headed, six-armed Ji Ning battled with full force against Xiamang Zishan, then diverted part of his attention to use his sword formation against Cangwu Jiu. This caused the eyes of Yu Wei, who was only controlling her phoenixes to protect herself, to instantly turn red.

How long had it been? It had already been six months. During the past six months, she and Ning had adventured together through the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. They had fought nearly a hundred times on every single day; sometimes, others fled, while other times, it was her and Ning who fled!

Ning was more powerful than her, and was a Fiendgod Body Refiner as well; each time they were in danger, it had always been Ning who had charged forward to block the enemy from pursuing. Although this time there were only two enemies fighting them, compared to the previous dangers they had undergone, this was the most dangerous one of them all!

“Senior apprentice-sister, hurry up and leave!” Ning’s voice echoed out in Yu Wei’s mind.

“He’s telling me to leave again. To leave again. Why am I always a burden to him?” Yu Wei ground her teeth, tears flashing through her eyes. She sent back, “Junior apprentice-brother, don’t worry about me. I’m not strong enough to continue. I’ll give up. I’m going to leave this Diagram. In the future, you’ll have to rely on yourself.”

With her slowing him down, Ji Ning would definitely find things easier. Given his power, there was no need at all for him to go fight anyone head-on if he didn’t have to.

Whoosh...

In front of Yu Wei, many talismans suddenly appeared, and they scattered out in the area around her.

She truly didn't want to accept this.

It had only been six months.

She truly wanted to accompany Ji Ning in continuing to journey through the world of the Diagram until the year was over.

“Give up the talismans and I'll spare your life.” Cangwu Jiu, in midair, revealed a smile. But suddenly...his smile froze.

This was because Yu Wei, who had just thrown out all her talismans... actually grabbed a handful back. Then, with a wave of her hand, she actually collected all of them once more.

“Are you looking to die?!” Cangwu Jiu, who felt as though he had just been played for a fool, was instantly enraged. He no longer waited there in midair; he immediately transformed into a streak of light and charged downwards.

Yu Wei, who had just taken back her talismans, now had a deep, dark, dangerous look in her eyes. She stared at the charging Cangwu Jiu, then gently pointed a single finger towards him. Instantly, the 72 Rahu Godneedles separated into two groups which undulated in the air.

36 of the Rahu Godneedles, summoning the power of the natural world, formed into a single, enormous black phoenix. This phoenix was completely black, and the tail-feathers of the phoenix blazed with black flames.

As for the other 36 Rahu Godneedles, they transformed into an enormous white phoenix which was completely pristine and pure, emanating an almost holy gaze. Lines of glowing white light could be seen emanating from the tail-feathers of the white phoenix as well.

“Eh?” Cangwu Jiu instantly felt his heart tremble as an inexplicable, nameless sensation of danger caused him to instantly explode forth with full power.

Whoosh! The 60 meter tall Cangwu Jiu struck out with his golden right arm, and his saber was absolutely dazzling to behold, leaving behind a beautiful, solitary, perfect arc in the skies as it chopped downwards towards that black phoenix. The black phoenix let out a bird's call; although it was knocked backwards, it wasn't damaged in the slightest.

"Screech!" The white phoenix began to battle against Cangwu Jiu's black vulture...and the black vulture actually began to tremble and crack.

"How can this be? She, she..." Cangwu Jiu was incomparably shocked and angered. This woman was clearly much weaker than him! Ji Ning was one thing; he had been famous before this, and was even capable of battling with Xiamang Zishang for so long. Most likely, Cangwu Jiu himself was only on par with Ji Ning.

But how was it that this woman, who had no reputation whatsoever, was able to completely block him now?

"Not happening. Don't believe it." Cangwu Jiu exploded with power, also manifesting two more heads and four more arms. He now wielded three scimitars in his hands, and he transformed into a tempest as he shot forward, his scimitar-light seeming capable of splitting the skies and carrying a terrifying majesty.

But the black phoenix and the white phoenix supported each other...and were actually able to block the berserk Cangwu Jiu.

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Previously, Mu Northson, the Whitewater Hound, Little Qing, Immortal Fivecraze, Adept Vastriver, Northmont Baiwei, and Ninelotus were all extremely nervous. Now, they were all stunned. How had Yu Wei suddenly exploded forth with such power? Her defense was completely airtight, causing even Cangwu Jiu to be unable to do anything to her at all. This was simply inconceivable!

It was Cangwu Jiu she was facing!

"Can, can it be that senior apprentice-sister had been hiding her power all along?" Northson was puzzled. "But she hasn't been training for much

longer than senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning has.”

The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

The Xia Emperor, watching, couldn’t help but smile. “The situation has just reversed.”

“Just like in the poem; ‘the same mountains and the same rivers, with seemingly no path forward; then the shady willow tree, the brilliant flowers, and a mountain village’¹. Something pleasant and unexpected has just occurred.” Lu Dongbin sighed in surprised. “Who would’ve imagined that at this critical moment, the little girl managed to reawaken her memories from her past life? Judging from what I saw...her reawakening of memories caused her to master at least four complete Dao-Paths. Her level of insight in the Grand Dao of Taiji is quite high as well; in her past life, she must’ve been a fairly formidable Loose Immortal.”

The Grand Dao of Taiji and four complete Dao-Paths; this would make someone a supreme expert amongst Loose Immortals.

“She had already mastered two Daos before this.” The Immortal Elder of the Northlands, nursing a cup of wine, rolled his head. “When one is at a high enough level of comprehension, it does indeed become possible for the memories from a previous life to reawaken. However, it is quite hard for the memories of a past life as a Loose Immortal to completely awaken; it seems in that instant, she suffered a severe mental blow which stimulated her, causing her soul to instantly explode and activate the hidden memories.”

“Mm.”

“Right.”

The Pure Yang True Immortals present all nodded.

The Conclave of Immortal Destiny had more than a hundred thousand participants, and there were many reincarnated Immortals amongst them. It was indeed theoretically possible for them to reawaken their past memories...but it was extremely, extremely rare.

“What’s the name of this little lass?” Lu Dongbin looked towards the

Xia Emperor. “I don’t know her name yet.”

“Her name is Yu Wei. Her Daoist title is Rainbowflame; because she is a reincarnated Immortal, she is referred to by others as the Rainbowflame Fairy,” the Xia Emperor said. “She, too, hails from the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery. You already know about Ji Ning, who is next to her. This time, the Black-White College has produced three attendees, and each of them truly are formidable.”

“The Sloppy Daoist is the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu, and his power is on par with Cangwu Jiu, Xiamang Zishan, and Ji Ning. This Yu Wei was originally weaker, but now that she’s regained her former memories, she’s on the same level as well,” Sovereign Hao said with a sigh.

“As I see it, the Sloppy Daoist has trained for more than a century, while Yu Wei had memories from a past life that she reawakened. But Ji Ning has only trained for thirty years, yet already has such incredible power... this is rather inconceivable.” Lu Dongbin stroked his jaw, murmuring to himself, “As I see it, Ji Ning has tremendous potential.”

The Xia Emperor laughed. “Lu Dongbin, can it be that you want to take on a disciple?”

“No, no, no...I actually have more of a liking for that little lass named Yu Wei.” Lu Dongbin’s eyes lit up. “She was actually stimulated to the point of having her former memories awaken; this little lass is quite, quite amusing.”

The others all immediately shook their heads. Reincarnated Immortals generally didn’t have much potential; if they weren’t able to overcome the tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal in their past life, then the chances they would succeed in this one would be very, very low.

“Ji Ning does have some potential.” The Xia Emperor murmured quietly to himself. He had already taken notice of twenty one youths in this Conclave, each of which had tremendous potential; Ji Ning was one of them.

Within the world of the Diagram.

BOOM!

Ji Ning was suppressed by Xiamang Zishan's might; although he used his agility to counter the other's raw power, he was still wounded by their colliding blows. Still, this sort of injury was minor; Ning was still paying full attention to his senior apprentice-sister, only to discover that under Cangwu Jiu's attack, Yu Wei had suddenly exploded with power. She was actually able to fight him to a standstill! This caused Ning to feel both astonished and delighted.

"Junior apprentice-brother, come over here. Hurry up and collect your sword array," Yu Wei sent frantically.

"Senior apprentice-sister!" Ning stopped wasting time with Xiamang Zishan. With a whoosh, he swept through the air to move towards Yu Wei, while at the same time mentally commanding the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] swords to return to him.

"Let's go." Yu Wei grabbed Ning by the arm.

The black phoenix and the white phoenix suddenly began to revolve around each other, forming into a black and white vortex. Yu Wei grabbed Ning, then charged into the vortex.

Swoosh!

A brilliant, dazzling streak of black-and-white light appeared in the skies. They had instantly moved more than a thousand kilometers away.

"What, what technique is this?!" Xiamang Zishan walked over, saying in astonishment, "How could they have escaped so quickly? Cangwu Jiu, even you were unable to catch them? Didn't you say that you are the fastest person in the world at the Wanxiang level?"

"I can't catch them." Cangwu Jiu shook his head. "I can tell that this is evasive technique which uses a magic treasure...a technique that was specifically designed for escape, formed from the Grand Dao of Taiji. This woman has an extremely high level of comprehension in the Grand Dao of Taiji!"

.....

Within a mountain cave. After setting up a simple formation, Ning plopped his rear down.

“Xiamang Zishan really was an absolute madman.” Ning felt utterly exhausted; the earlier battle had been simply too frenetic. Suddenly, from the corner of his eye he saw a pool of water located deep in the cave. He immediately ran over, then used his hands to cup some water and wash his face. “That feels great.”

Yu Wei laughed.

She was going to be able to continue to stay with her junior apprentice-brother in the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers.

She walked towards the side of the pool, then sat down. With a wave of her hand, she produced a jade flute, then began to gently blow it.

The sound of the flute was melodious and leisurely, seeming to reach deep into a person’s heart.

Ning, stunned, put down the water in his hands and sat down to listen.

The sound of the flute was drifting and soft...

...it spoke of a vast grassland, a peaceful, gentle tribe, and a female child who was the member of that small tribe...

...the peace was destroyed, and disaster descended...

...the female child embarked upon the path of slaughter, becoming a terrifying female Asura...

.....

One scene after another, starting from childhood in the past life, to death and reincarnation...they all entered Ning’s mind.

The sound of the flute seemed to possess an indescribable magic power, causing Ning to feel joy, rage, sorry, and pleasure. It was a flute song that bored straight through to the heart. Ning was completely drawn into it. He looked at the black-robed woman playing the flute. This memory was deeply engraved into Ning’s heart. Even after a tremendous period of time passed, he would still be unable to forget it.

Drip.

A single tear fell down onto the ground, staining the dirt.

Ning was startled awakened from the reverie the flute song had brought him into. Only now did he realize that Yu Wei had two tearstains on her face. He couldn't help but call out, "Senior apprentice-sister!" Yu Wei trembled...then gently put down her flute.

"Senior apprentice-sister, you..." Ning was a bit worried.

"I'm fine." Yu Wei shook her head, looking at Ning. She even smiled. "I just thought of some things in my past life. Although everything has already happened...now that the memories have truly returned, they really do make it hard to control one's emotions. Still, those are all in the past now; let the past be in the past. I've already reincarnated into a different world. In truth...I would rather not know about what happened in my past life."

"Can you talk to me about it?" Ning asked.

"I don't want to." Yu Wei shook her head.

"Then...did you have a Dao-companion in your past life?" Ning suddenly asked.

Yu Wei was startled. She gave Ning a close look, as though wanting to see something in Ning's expression. She then gently shook her head. "I did not!"

*

1. In the original Chinese, only a very short fragment of the poem was included, which has become an idiom. The full poem, which comes from 1166, involves a weary traveler who travelled through countless mountains that seemed identical, but then finally, as he was expecting yet another identical mountain, he saw a beautiful village with a willow tree and brilliant flowers beneath it.

Chapter 13: Immortals and Gods

“Oh.” Ning said hurriedly, “I...used up a lot of divine power in the previous battle. I need to take a rest.”

As he spoke, Ning hurriedly walked deeper into the cave. Waving his arm, he chopped out a neat, flat region onto the ground and then lay down. Using his arms as a pillow, he immediately closed his eyes and began to snore.

He seemed calm, but in his heart Ning felt a bit confused.

“Why the hell did I ask senior apprentice-sister if she had a Dao-companion or not?” Ning’s mind was restless. He was a smart person, and an Immortal cultivator who had understood his own heart long ago. He quickly understood the issue. “Can it be that I’m...”

“Forget it...how can Dao-companions be so casually joined?”

“Am I mentally ready?”

“Not yet! I’m not yet ready...”

Ning turned in his sleep, suppressing everything in his heart.

He thought back to the experiences he had in the past half year. He thought back to the first time he had met her, and all the times he had met her up till today. Ning had to admit...from the very beginning, he had felt very friendly towards her, because she was unlike Ninelotus, who had many beliefs that were different from Ning’s. He and Ninelotus were from different worlds. As for Yu Wei...many of her beliefs were the same as his, and her personality was similar as well!

Her birth...

Her experiences...

Her talent...

He and Yu Wei were very similar. She was even more intelligent than him! The past half year he had spent with her was very relaxed and comfortable. She had silently, tracelessly slipped deep into his heart with

her warmth. Just now in particular, when she had played the flute, the song of the flute had thoroughly penetrated his heart. Ning could even feel the joy, the pain, and the sadness she felt in her heart...

This feeling, as though he had touched her soul, made Ning feel a certain softness towards her. He even wanted to go over and hug her. This was why his subconscious had moved him to ask her about Dao-companions.

"Dao-companions...this sort of promise cannot be casually made." Ning sighed quietly to himself in his heart.

.....

Yu Wei watched Ning lie there deep in the cave. She rose, then walked to the entrance of the cave, where she sat down. She stared at the vast, seemingly endless mountain forest. The cave was protected by a bewildering formation, and so the outside world couldn't see inside it.

Moonlight shone down into the cave.

Yu Wei picked up her flute, holding it as she sat there quietly.

"I can feel junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning's heart."

"Previously, I held back, wanting to let it all pass."

"But on the sixth day I was in the Diagram, I was in dire straits...despite how vast the Diagram was, junior apprentice-brother ran into me. Can it be that fate is telling me that I should be together with him?"

"But...can I even have a Dao-companion? Can I dare hope for a Dao-companion?"

Yu Wei stared at the moon hanging high in the skies. She quietly asked... "Heavens above...what should I do?"

Yu Wei understood that she had reached a fork in the path.

If she chose to be with Ning, then the two might have a chance. But if she didn't want to be with him, then after leaving the Diagram, she would have to separate from him and make a clean break.

.....

One month after another passed. The number of Wanxiang Adepts within the Diagram dropped continuously. Now, virtually all the remaining competitors within the Diagram were monsters capable of exploding forth with power that rivaled ordinary Loose Immortals.

Within the imperial citadel's plaza.

"Haha, only a thousand remain within the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, but the Black-White College has taken up three of those slots!" Immortal Fivecraze was utterly delighted. There was no way any of the other powers of Stillwater Commandery, including the Northmont clan of Stillwater, could compare to the Black-White College in this regard. The three experts the Black-White College had sent out this time were simply too dazzling.

"Even the Marquis of Stillwater came over to chat with me for quite a long period of time. Even other marquises came over, as well as leaders of supreme clans and sects." Immortal Fivecraze then frowned. "But it's weird...Ji Ning is clearly very powerful as well, but why is it that those who came to chat with me discussed little Sloppy even more?"

He could sense the goodwill these major clans and sects were displaying towards the Black-White College was primarily aimed towards befriending the Sloppy Daoist. It seemed as though Ji Ning and Yu Wei were far from being comparable with the Sloppy daoist.

"Weird, weird. Ji Ning is very formidable as well, and he's trained for an even shorter period of time." Immortal Fivecraze was puzzled.

.....

"How bizarre." Lu Dongbin, who had spent a period of time napping in the main hall of the Skylight Palace, stared at the Diagram. "I took a three month nap...why is that this little girl named Yu Wei still hasn't become Dao-companions with Ji Ning yet?"

"Dao-companions represent a promise that cannot be so easily uttered!" The Pure Yang True Immortal who was dressed in black robes decorated

with a blood-colored taiji diagram shook his head.

“You can’t dawdle when it comes to matters of love!” Lu Dongbin shook his head. “Based on my experiences roaming the Three Realms and countless minor worlds, matters of love must be immediately seized and settled down upon at the critical moments in time! If you hesitate, the more you dawdle, the more difficult it will become to form Dao-companions. I am willing to bet on it! If this Yu Wei and Ji Ning are to become Dao-companions, they’ll become Dao-companions within the Diagram. If they don’t, then after they leave it...without these shared daily life-and-death experiences, the chances will drop even more!”

“Do any of you dare to bet against me?” Lu Dongbin stared at them.

“Lu Dongbin, you are a Sage of Love. You spout so much wisdom about love...why don’t you have a Dao-companion of your own?” The True Immortal with the blood-colored taiji diagram robes spoke out.

“Those in the game are blinded by it. Those who are watching the game have clear eyes.” Lu Dongbin gave a calm response, then stopped talking.

.....

Within a quiet mountain. A bewildering formation had been set down. Ning was seated in the lotus position atop a grassy area.

Streams of fire and water swirled around the surrounding area. Surges of power from the Solar Star and the Lunar Star were being absorbed into Ning’s body. Although they were within the world of the Diagram, he was still able to train in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

Rumble...

A series of rumbling sounds could be heard from within Ning’s body. His bones were clattering together as his muscles and skin were rapidly transforming.

At his current level, Ning’s physical body was already extremely tough; he wasn’t too far off from the likes of the Fiendgod, Xiangliu Fang. A casual breath from him could generate a hurricane that would sweep out for a thousand kilometers.

Slowly...everything calmed down. Ning opened his eyes, revealing a smile.

“Junior apprentice-brother?” Yu Wei, who had been standing guard for him, looked eagerly at Ning.

“Mm. I’ve already broken through.” Ning let out a laugh. “It took me quite a few years, but I’ve finally managed to reach the twelfth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. And it really is different; the twelfth level of this technique...it’s comparable to ordinary early Primal stage Fiendgod Body Refiners. My divine body and my soul have completely joined...and I can feel that my soul is rapidly strengthening.”

Fiendgod Body Refiners and Ki Refiners...these were two different paths. Upon reaching the Primal level, Fiendgods could directly split off a clone! Upon reaching the Void level, they could pluck out a hair and transform it into a clone!

Now that Ning had trained to the twelfth stage, his body was actually quite similar to the Primal Turtle-Snake in that it was capable of nourishing the soul. In addition, he was able to join his soul to his body! His soul was able to enter every single part of his body. In other words... Ning’s current body was no longer made of mere flesh. His flesh and blood contained his soul within it as well! This was why he was now capable of creating mobile ‘clones’.

“Your soul is rapidly gaining in strength?” Yu Wei hurriedly said, “I heard that the souls of Fiendgods are generally even more powerful than that of ordinary Primal Daoists.”

“It’s true.” Ning nodded. “The soul-nourishment provided by my divine body is even more astonishing than that provided by the Primal Turtle-Snake...based on what I sensed when I created my Primaltwin, my Fiendgod body is strengthening my soul at least five or six times faster than the Primal Turtle-Snake did.”

“No wonder Fiendgod Body Refiners are so powerful. Everyone says that at higher levels, Fiendgod Body Refiners are even more powerful,

especially after overcoming the Celestial Tribulation and becoming Empyrean Gods. Empyrean Gods are comparable to Pure Yang True Immortals in power,” Yu Wei sighed.

“Senior apprentice-sister, you know about Empyrean Gods and Pure Yang True Immortals?” Ning was startled.

“Don’t forget that I’m a reincarnated Immortal.” Yu Wei nodded. “Based on what I know...for Immortal cultivators, the stages are Zifu Disciples, Wanxiang Adepts, Primal Daoists, Void-level Earth Immortals...and, for those who pass the Celestial Tribulation, the stages are Celestial Immortals and True Immortals! True Immortals are also known as Pure Yang True Immortals. After them are Golden Immortals of the Great Firmament, also known as Daofathers of the Great Firmament! Alternately, they can just be addressed as Daofather! Daofathers are the absolute most supreme figures of the Three Realms. They are unquestioned hegemons who are even more exalted in status than the Celestial Emperor!”

Ning’s eyes lit up. He didn’t know any of these things. He had only trained for thirty years. Compared to someone who had memories from a past life, he did indeed know very little regarding the Three Realms.

“Golden Immortals of the Great Firmament, also known as Daofathers of the Great Firmament or as Daofathers?” Ning murmured to himself.

“Mastery of a Dao-Path is a prerequisite for becoming a Celestial Immortal. Mastery of a Grand Dao is a prerequisite for becoming a Pure Yang True Immortal. And mastery of a Heavenly Dao is the prerequisite for becoming a Daofather of the Great Firmament!” Yu Wei said.

Ning’s heart shook. Mastery of a Heavenly Dao?

When the Black-White College’s Headmaster Daoist Jadesea had discussed these things with him, he hadn’t explained in such detail. It seemed as though Yu Wei was truly extraordinary in her past life. At least, she knew much more than Daoist Jadesea!

“After Pangu established the heavens and the earth, there were ten Heavenly Daos! This is common knowledge for Celestial Immortals. It

was a Celestial Immortal who told me this," Yu Wei said.

"Ten Heavenly Daos?" Ning immediately asked, "What are the ten?"

"They are the Heavenly Dao of Metal, the Heavenly Dao of Wood, the Heavenly Dao of Water, the Heavenly Dao of Fire, the Heavenly Dao of Earth, the Heavenly Dao of Life, the Heavenly Dao of Destruction, the Heavenly Dao of Yin, the Heavenly Dao of Yang, the Heavenly Dao of Primordial Chaos," Yu Wei said.

Ning immediately memorized this all.

Metal, wood, water, fire, earth, Yin, Yang, life, destruction, and primordial chaos!

"All things in the world were born from primordial chaos. They are then split into Yin and Yang. The Three Realms...its foundation comes from the Five Elements," Yu Wei said. "For example, your Dao of Rainwater actually belongs to the Grand Dao of the Waterdrop. As for the Grand Dao of the Waterdrop, it belongs to the Heavenly Dao of Water."

Ning nodded.

Dao. Grand Dao. Heavenly Dao.

The Five Elements served as the foundation for the functioning of the Three Realms, and were all Heavenly Daos. This was as he had expected.

"Mastery of a complete Grand Dao is already incredibly difficult," Yu Wei said. "As for the legendary Heavenly Daos...only those who master them can have the exalted title of 'Daofather'. After all, the Heavenly Daos are the source of all things. Thus, their masters can be titled Daofathers!"

Ning now understood.

Daoist Threelives had been born with mastery of a Grand Dao. He had later mastered many Grand Daos, but never a Heavenly Dao.

"Daofathers of the Great Firmament are seated above all. They possess inconceivable power, and are the hegemons of the Three Realms," Yu Wei said. "Pure Yang True Immortals are the experts of the Three Realms!"

Daofathers won't casually engage in combat, and so the most glorious, eye-catching figures of the Three Realms are actually the True Immortals. As for Celestial Immortals, they are also free-willed, unconstrained figures with immortal life. They can dominate a region for themselves; after all, Pure Yang True Immortals are fairly rare in the Three Worlds, and so Celestial Immortals have very high statuses as well."

Ning nodded. Only today, did he understand...some of the higher levels of the Immortal path.

"What about the path of Fiendgods?" Ning immediately asked.

"After Fiendgods pass the Heavenly Tribulation, they become Empyrean Gods! Empyrean Gods are comparable to Pure Yang True Immortals in power. Every single one of them is an expert of the Three Realms," Yu Wei said. "Above Empyrean Gods are True Gods! True Gods are generally actual Fiendgods who have created their own divine ability. They war against the heavens and against the earth with terrifying power, and are absolutely comparable to Golden Immortal Daofathers of the Great Firmament!"

"True Gods are the highest level of Fiendgods possible. According to legends...the Fiendgods born in the primordial chaos before the heavens were established were at all least Empyrean Gods! The strongest amongst them were True Gods of Primordial Chaos! They were born into the very highest realms of power of the Three Realms. Even without training, they were incomparably frightening figures."

Chapter 14: The Final Month

Yu Wei said with envy, “They are the true favored children of the heavens. Ki Refiners revere Golden Immortal Daofathers of the Great Firmament, whereas Fiendgod Refiners revere True Gods of Primordial Chaos. Daofathers or True Gods; ever since Pangu established the heavens, they have been the most supreme of existences in the Three Realms. They are the ones who truly determine the destiny of the Three Realms. Even the Celestial Emperor is chosen by these major powers.”

Ning suddenly felt many thoughts flood his mind.

Daoist Threelives was born in primordial chaos and had mastered a Grand Dao. Clearly, Daoist Threelives was a True God of Primordial Chaos!

However, according to what the giant yellow bear had said, Daoist Threelives had once suffered a catastrophic defeat, losing an arm in it. The proud Daoist Threelives elected not to regrow his arm, continuing to only have one arm. Thanks to his constant research and meditation, he had developed one of the ten most terrifying divine abilities of the Three Realms...the [Starseizing Hand]!

“Ji Ning.” The giant yellow bear’s voice suddenly echoed in Ning’s mind. “Senior,” Ning immediately said.

“Amongst Empyrean Gods, there are those with powerful divine abilities and those with weak ones. Amongst True Gods, there are those with formidable divine abilities and ordinary ones. How can they all possibly be on par?” The giant yellow bear clearly felt displeased on behalf of his master. “In addition...if Master was still alive, I imagine that he would have long ago mastered a Heavenly Dao. Only...despite the passage of ages, Master has never come to seek me out...”

The giant yellow bear’s voice suddenly faded away. He didn’t know if Daoist Threelives was still alive or not either.

.....

After this conversation with Yu Wei, Ning's vision had been greatly broadened.

At the most exalted, venerable positions were the Daofathers of the Great Firmament and the True Gods of Primordial Chaos. The Three Realms were their chessboard, and they controlled everything in it.

The Celestial Emperor and the Yama-Kings of Hell were jointly decided upon and appointed by them.

"However...I wonder what Daoist Threelives encountered in the past, which caused even him to feel that he had no confidence in being able to survive," Ning pondered to himself. When Daoist Threelives had left behind the underwater estate, he had gone to deal with a so-called 'tremendous calamity'. Afterwards, all word of him had been lost, and he had never returned to the underwater estate.

Daoist Threelives was a major power. Something that could cause even him to feel uncertain regarding his chances of survival...what sort of calamity was that?!

"The Three Realms..."

"I imagine that senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei doesn't know the true face of the Three Realms either." Ning continued to feel as though a layer of gauze was preventing him from understanding the truth of things. For example, in the Netherworld Kingdom, he had encountered a terrifyingly strong power which had assaulted the Six Paths of Reincarnation. Fortunately, Ning had leapt into the Six Paths and been reincarnated; otherwise, he would've died permanently on the spot.

"Who attacked the Six Paths of Reincarnation?" The more Ning's horizons were broadened, the more he was amazed...because the Six Paths of Reincarnation were the most important, central region for the functioning of the Three Realms. Most likely, even major powers wouldn't dare to act rashly there. Otherwise, the other major powers would be enraged and join forces to deal with them.

"I'm nothing but an ant; this matter isn't for me to worry about. If the heavens fall, the tall fellows will hold it up." Ning quickly discarded these

thoughts for now.

Time passed in the blink of an eye. It was already the twelfth month within the trial of the Diagram. This was the final month!

A dirty-looking maiden and a violet-robed youth were walking forward, shoulder-to-shoulder.

“Where the hell did this Adept Ninedeaths come from?” The violet-robed youth glanced sideways at the maiden, secretly muttering to himself. He, Xiamang Qi, was one of the most outstanding young members of the imperial Xiamang clan, second only to Xiamang Zishan! In addition, he had never been convinced of his inferiority; he always wanted to be able to overcome Zishan with his power.

During this Conclave, Xiamang Qi had revealed his magnificence as well. His strength was formidable...but upon encounter this girl, this so-called ‘Adept Ninedeaths’, he had felt deflated.

“This girl is too powerful. No matter how I hit her, I couldn’t injure her. Her body is just like a magic treasure.” The violet-robed youth was very resigned. “Adept Ninedeaths? More like Adept Nodeath!”

The dirty maiden had said to him back then, “I have enough talismans already. The more time passes in the Diagram, the more powerful the survivors are. Many of them have already formed into small teams. Kid, you seem pretty powerful; shall we join into a team of our own? That will make the final two months easier.”

“If we encounter any enemies and kill them, can I have the talismans?” Xiamang Qi listed his requirement.

“Fine.” The dirty maiden nodded, and so Xiamang Qi and Adept Ninedeaths joined forces.

“Eh?” The two suddenly came to a halt. They stared into the distance, where four figures had appeared, some male and some female.

There was a wild, black-haired youth who was very skinny, a silver-haired maiden, a woman who was so beautiful she looked like a fairy from the legendary Moon Palace, and a bald, black-skinned youth. The

black-skinned youth was actually barefoot, and he wielded a gnarled black staff in his hands.

“Kindwater Qi? Second brother, why is it that you are travelling alongside Adept Danzhu?” Xiamang Qi laughed.

“Big brother?!” The skinny, black-haired youth called out in surprise.

These two were known as the ‘Two Qis’ of the imperial capital. This was because both of them had strange, rather wicked personalities. However, the two just so happened to take a liking to each other, and they had become sworn brothers. Xiamang Qi was the elder brother, while Kindwater Qi was the younger brother. 1

“The more time passes, the more dangerous it gets; I no longer dare to travel alone.” Kindwater Qi said with resignation, “I feel confident in my power, but even Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu have formed an alliance long ago. We have to do the same! The four of us even fought against those two. Fortunately, thanks to Blackstone’s presence, the two were frightened into immediately fleeing.”

“Oh?” Xiamang Qi was surprised, and the dirty maiden by his side, Adept Ninedeaths, revealed a look of surprise as well.

Someone had caused Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu to flee?

“Introduce us,” Xiamang Qi said with a laugh.

“You already know Adept Danzhu of the East Seas.” The black-haired Kindwater Qi pointed at the beautiful maiden who looked like a fairy from the Moon Palace. Adept Danzhu smiled and nodded at them.

Kindwater Qi then pointed at the silver-haired maiden. “This is Adept Snowfly; her magic arts are extremely powerful.”

He then pointed at the barefoot, black-skinned youth with a gnarled black staff. “This is Adept Blackstone. Adept Blackstone is exceptionally skilled in the Fuxi Formation Staffs, and a true grandmaster of the art of formations...with him present, we can flee when we wish and attack when we wish. Adept Blackstone is also extremely powerful in close combat. With a single blow, he was able to block an attack from Xiamang

Zishan...as I see it, Adept Blackstone absolutely has a chance to become number one in this Conclave."

Xiamang Qi and Adept Ninedeaths both looked towards the bald, staff-wielding, black-skinned youth.

It was quite curious. When they faced this bald, black-skinned youth, they felt as though they were facing the vast heavens themselves...

"A grandmaster of formations? Capable of withstanding Xiamang Zishan in close combat?" Xiamang Qi was secretly shocked.

"Hm..." The dirty maiden looked towards the bald, black-skinned youth with curiosity as well. He, in turn, was looking back at her. The two of them both had an indescribable feeling...that the other was quite terrifying!

"How about it? Shall we travel together?" Xiamang Qi asked.

Kindwater Qi looked towards the black-skinned youth.

The black-skinned youth gave the dirty maiden a glance, then revealed an extremely thin smile. "Fine."

"Fine." The dirty maiden spoke out as well.

And so...

The six of them joined into a squad.

In this squad, Adepts Blackstone, Ninedeaths, and Danzhu had already acquired more than 1400 talismans. As for the other three, Xiamang Qi, Kindwater Qi, and Adept Snowfly still needed a bit more.

.....

Ji Ning and Yu Wei were wandering the mountains as well. They moved as fast as the wind, instantly moving across the peaks. As they walked, they released their divine sense to scan up to a thousand kilometers away.

Although it was the twelfth month already, nothing had changed between the two. Ji Ning and Yu Wei acted like a pair of normal fellow disciples.

“Senior apprentice-sister, how many talismans do you have? How many more do you need?” Ning asked.

“Do you have enough?” Yu Wei asked.

“I have 1200 or so,” Ning said. “Actually, since everyone is going to have different amounts of talismans, I should have a 99% chance of ranking in the top eighty.”

“Better to be safe. Only if you have 1370 will you be absolutely certain to be qualified of passing the trial,” Yu Wei said. “I have slightly fewer talismans than you; I have nearly eight hundred.”

Ning nodded. The two had continued to split talismans based on who had killed the foe. Although Ning had been trying to hold back for her sake, ever since he had reached the twelfth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], his power had simply grown too great. Upon encountering some powerful foes, Ning had to explode forth with full power. Naturally, he would thus be the one to kill them, and so the talismans would go to him.

“In the final month, I imagine that all of the remaining survivors have hundreds of talismans on them. As long as we just kill two or three, we’ll have enough,” Ning said.

“But killing those final two or three will be very hard.” Yu Wei spoke with great solemnity as well.

There were now fewer and fewer people present. It was quite hard to run into someone, and in each battle, if the enemy felt that the situation was bad, they would immediately flee! To kill them or force them to give up their talismans...it was far too difficult!

“We still have plenty of time. We have more than half a month,” Ning said.

The two continued to advance, and in the blink of an eye, they had passed more than a thousand kilometers. Their divine sense continued to sweep out to a thousand kilometers as well.

“Eh?” Ning and Yu Wei suddenly raised their heads, staring towards the

sky. A ship was charging downwards at high speed towards them.

“That ship is covered with restrictive spells, making it unable to be scanned by divine sense. They come with ill intentions. Be careful.” Yu Wei mentally messaged Ning, but the two were bold due to their power; they wouldn’t easily retreat or flee.

Swoosh!

A thousand kilometers was passed in an instant. The ship vanished, and six figures appeared on the grassy ground.

Ning and Yu Wei’s pupils contracted.

“Xiamang Qi, a genius of the imperial Xiamang clan. Kindwater Qi, a genius of the Kindwater clan. And Adept Danzhu!” Ning and Yu Wei’s glances fell upon the figure of the beautiful Adept Danzhu, who looked like a fairy maiden from the Moon Palace. Of the six before them, the most famous one was Adept Danzhu.

.....

The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

“For the Ji Ning – Yu Wei pair, their earlier encounter with Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu was a tribulation.” Lu Dongbin said with a sigh, “That time, they only escaped because Yu Wei awakened her former memories. This time...these six are even more powerful. That dirty maiden has mastered five complete Daos! That bald, barefoot, black-skinned youth is an expert in formations. Both of these two are capable of fighting to be the number one competitor in this Conclave. Upon encounter this six-person squad...Ji Ning’s duo is in huge trouble.”

“Within the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, how many have died in the past year? Each battle was a life-and-death trial for them. For your precious little pair of Dao-companions...this is nothing more than a slightly tougher trial,” Truelord Chiji said calmly.

2

“This battle is going to be interesting,” the Xia Emperor laughed.

There were roughly twenty or so that had a chance at the top spot in this Conclave.

Adept Ninedeaths, Adept Blackstone, and Ji Ning, after his recent breakthrough...they all had a chance at becoming number one in this Conclave.

*

1. Qi can mean bizarre/strange/wondrous.
2. Chiji literally means crimson taiji; this is most likely the person with the blood-taiji robes mentioned earlier.

Chapter 15: Dire Circumstances

Although Ji Ning and Yu Wei were wary, they weren't afraid. As they saw it, the only one of the six who they needed to be careful of was Adept Danzhu. Ning had broken through to the twelfth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], and he was completely confident in being able to defeat Adept Danzhu. What he didn't realize was that although Adept Danzhu was formidable, in this six-person squad, Adept Blackstone and Adept Ninedeaths were even more frightening.

Whoosh! The bald, barefoot, black-skinned youth suddenly smirked, and instantly, streaks of light shot out everywhere like bolts of lightning. They were ancient, plain-looking Fuxi Staffs.

"Fuxi Staffs! A formation!" Ning was startled. There were very few supreme geniuses who also trained in formations.

Rumble...

Streaks of light intersected and runes formed and flowed. The formation appeared, locking down the nearby region of space for ten kilometers, completely capturing Ning and Yu Wei within it.

"Done." The black-skinned youth said calmly, "I've already sealed this area off. There's no place these two can run to. Whether you decide to kill them or release them is up to you." He actually sat down in the lotus position towards the edges of the sealing barrier, planting his gnarled staff next to him. He just sat there, clearly not wanting to intervene.

He already had enough talismans; for him to set up this grand sealing formation against the enemies was enough of a show of kindness for his teammates. Have him do battle as well? He couldn't be bothered to...and in his bones, he wasn't the type of person who enjoyed battle.

"Ji Ning." Xiamang Qi said coldly, "Obediently hand over all of your talismans, and the two of you can live. Otherwise...death is your only escape!"

“Hand over your talismans!” Kindwater Qi barked as well.

“Hand them over.” The silver-haired maiden, Adept Snowfly, barked at them as well.

These three didn’t have enough talismans yet. Naturally, they felt the most urgent.

Adept Danzhu smiled. “Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, to tell you the truth, there are people in this squad who are more powerful than me. I urge you to cease any attempts at struggling and hand over the talismans. That way, you will stay alive. You’ve only trained for a very short period of time; your potential is limitless. There’s no need for you to push yourself too far in this Conclave.”

Ning stood there in the distance. “Come and take them, if you can.” He replied coldly, “You want me to just give them up to you? Keep dreaming.”

Alongside Ning’s voice, an enormous Waterflame Lotus suddenly appeared and bloomed. The layers of fiery lotus petals and watery lotus petals were incomparably beautiful as they continuously swiveled. Ning and Yu Wei were in the center, protected by the enormous Waterflame Lotus.

“Don’t waste words with them,” the silver-haired maiden said coldly. “Attack.” As she spoke, a horsetail whisk suddenly appeared in her hand. She flicked it outwards, and thousands of white strands flew towards the air, then formed into a bizarre beast’s head. This snowy white beast’s head appeared incomparably savage. Its mouth was filled with rows on rows of jagged teeth that gnashed against each other.

The snowy white beast head opened its mouth, then bit downwards towards Ning and Yu Wei.

The Waterflame Lotus, however, continued to protect the two of them.

Crunch. The snowy white head bit down against the Waterflame Lotus, and its countless teeth ground against each other, easily biting through a layer of leaves.

“Oh?” Ning was secretly startled. Still, as he had expected, no one who

was able to survive to this stage would be easy to handle.

“Kill.” Kindwater Qi’s hands formed together into a hand-seal. Instantly, layers of black light flew out from his body, forming giant serpents that appeared in midair. A total of six giant black serpents appeared, wildly assaulting Ning and Yu Wei and also breaking through a layer of leaves.

“Too stubborn.” Adept Danzhu let out a soft sigh, but then her eyes suddenly lit up. An invisible divine will attack instantly swept towards Ning and Yu Wei.

Yu Wei’s face turned white. As for Ning, he felt as though his soul was being stabbed at by a needle-like divine will. However, his soul and his divine body had now completely fused together, and it was far more durable against this sort of attack. He was able to completely withstand it.

“Ninedeaths, kill them!” Xiamang Qi howled as he transformed into a 54-meter tall giant. His entire body glowed with a golden light, and he radiated an aura that filled the heavens. He was wielding a giant warblade in his hands, and he trampled past the already-shattered lotus leaves as he charged towards Ning and Yu Wei.

“Ji Ning? Seems pretty powerful.” The dirty-looking maiden chortled. With a flicker, she transformed to a size of sixty meters, but her body didn’t give off a hint of any aura at all. She seemed quite ordinary, just enormous, and she charged forward with completely empty hands.

The five of them had instantly attacked in unison.

“F*ck off!”

Ning suddenly exploded with power, becoming a 54-meter tall giant with an aura that similarly filled the heavens. Letting out an enraged roar, his divine will formed into countless invisible swords, warblades, and longspears that immediately struck towards Adept Danzhu, Adept Snowfly, Adept Ninedeaths, Kindwater Qi, and Xiamang Qi.

When a Ki cultivator broke through to the Primal Daoist level, it was his soul that benefited the most. Similarly, once a Fiendgod Body Refiner

broke through to the Primal level, his soul would be tremendously benefited as well. Ning had reached the twelfth stage, and his soul had been nourished by his divine body, resulting in explosively increasing in strength. In fact, it was already almost comparable to his Primaltwin's soul.

In this clash, the faces of all five immediately changed.

"BREAK!" Ning, his aura filling the heavens, wielded two enormous Immortal swords in his hands as he charged forward, sending the swords howling forth as his sword-light chopped directly against that enormous snowy white beast's head.

BOOM!

The snowy white beast's head was immediately chopped apart and collapsed, transforming back into countless white strands that flew black to the silver-haired maiden with the flywhisk. She had a look of shock on her face.

"Go!" After breaking through the snowy white hound with one sword chop, Ning sent his dominating sword-light forward once more, charging straight against the six giant black snakes, knocking all of them flying backwards.

"Kill!" With the next step, Ning arrived in front of Xiamang Qi, and his sword-light chopped directly towards him.

"Block!" Xiamang Qi was frightened by Ning's ferocious, savage aura. He didn't dare to be overconfident, and he focused on defense. CLANG! With a loud sound, Xiamang Qi's enormous, 54-meter tall giant body was knocked backwards like a meteor, slamming directly against the walls of the distant sealing barrier.

"He's this powerful?!" Xiamang Qi, Kindwater Qi, and Adept Snowfly were both awestruck. Against the three of them, Ning had absolutely suppressed and crushed them; if they were fighting one-on-one, he probably would've taken their lives in just two or three exchanges of blows.

Swoosh. Right at this moment, the dirty-looking youth charged straight forward towards Ning. She struck out with her palm, and it hacked downwards like a knife towards Ning. This palm-blow...it was simply perfectly exquisite. Ning could sense the unfathomable profoundness of it, a profoundness which absolutely surpassed his own sword technique.

Ning raised his own sword as well to meet the palm.

BANG!

The sword-light and the palm collided against each other; the dirty-looking maiden was knocked backwards and forced to take three steps back, while Ning only took a single step back.

“What?!” Ning was shocked. During the final few months in the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, he had always immediately used the [Starseizing Hand] when he attacked; he didn’t dare to hold anything back at this point. After all, none of the survivors were easy to deal with. For example, against Xiamang Qi, even though he had immediately used the [Starseizing Hand], he still hadn’t been able to kill him with a single blow. Clearly, all of the survivors were extremely powerful! But this maiden actually dared to block his sharp sword with her hands, and did so successfully?! This was insane!

“The rest of you, go handle that woman. Leave this Ji Ning to me.” The dirty-looking maiden was clearly quite excited.

Ning’s body blurred momentarily, and he instantly transformed into a three heads and six arms form. With six swords in his hands, he charged straight towards the dirty-looking maiden. “If you don’t want to die, then hurry up and leave!”

“It’s so rare for me to encounter a good opponent.” Instead of leaving, the dirty-looking maiden went to welcome his attacks.

“Kill, kill, kill!” Ning showed no mercy at all. After using [Three Heads, Six Arms], his sword-light rained down like a curtain of lightning. This dirty-looking maiden, however, relied on her pair of palms. They danced in front of her and were actually able to block the majority of the sword-light. Although the remaining sword-light blows were able to pierce onto

her body...they were only able to leave some minor wounds on her.

“How can her body be as tough as magic treasures?! My full-force blows can cause even Earth-ranked magic treasures to be torn asunder...but are only able to leave small wounds on her skin?” Ning was completely awestruck. “I can’t waste time with her.”

With a flash, Ning moved to charge towards Adept Snowfly and Kindwater Qi.

“You are mine!” The dirty-looking maiden’s body flashed as well. She, too, transformed with the [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique. She moved alongside Ning as though she were flying water, and her six palms continuously smashed and hacked towards Ning.

“What the hell?!” Ning was frantic. The maiden in front of him was completely insistent on continuing to fight against him. Although Ning’s swordplay was ferocious, against a person whose entire body was comparable to an unbreakable magic treasure, there was nothing he could do.

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Adept Snowfly, Kindwater Qi, Xiamang Qi, and Adept Danzhu, seeing the situation, all began to focus against Yu Wei.

“Black and white.”

“Taiji.”

Yu Wei stood there, the black phoenix and the white phoenix twirling around her. She was like an unbreakable steel wall, simultaneously dealing with the attacks of all four. The giant snowy white beast head, the six giant black serpents, and an enormous semi-translucent grand seal in the skies created by Adept Danzhu through a secret art...they came smashing down towards her two phoenixes repeatedly.

“Junior apprentice-brother.” Yu Wei sent a frantic mental call.

“Senior apprentice-sister.” Ning understood that she wasn’t going to be able to hold much longer. Although her power had increased

tremendously, and although she was an expert at defense...she still wasn't going to be able to defend against four at once.

The three-headed, six-armed Ji Ning roared furiously, "Get the f*ck away!"

"You aren't strong enough to make me." The dirty-looking maiden, also with three heads and six arms, had completely tied him down.

Ning hadn't even felt this stifled when fighting against Xiamang Zishan. Not only did this maiden have a body like a magic treasure, she also had an extremely, extremely high level of comprehension regarding the Dao. Each of her techniques were unfathomably miraculous, and she was able to completely tie him down, giving him no chance to run away from her at all.

"Junior apprentice-brother." Yu Wei's voice rang out in Ning's mind, and as it did, Ning saw what was happening from afar.

Boom!

The white phoenix finally collapsed, and the 54-meter tall Xiamang Qi charged towards Yu Wei, warblade at the ready.

"Go." Ning frantically summoned the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. Instantly, more than seven hundred swords appeared, floating in midair and condensing their power to form a streak of sword-light that shot out towards Xiamang Qi. Although Ning's close combat power had increased tremendously, the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] hadn't improve that much.

Clang! Xiamang Qi was able to block the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] with one saber blow. Although his body trembled from the collision, he continued to charged towards Yu Wei.

A single black phoenix was left, and it was struggling to defend against the grand seal, the giant black snake, and the snowy white beast head.

Xiamang Qi was charging into close combat...Yu Wei hurriedly moved to retreat, but given that they were trapped within this grand sealing formation and being attacked from all sides, where could she retreat to?!

Clang! After Xiamang Qi's warblade blocked the attack from the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], his right arm suddenly began to emanate hundreds of bizarre colors and even a strange black ki that caused one's heart to tremble as he grabbed towards Yu Wei.

"The [Myriad Hibernating Venoms]!" Yu Wei's face immediately changed.

BOOM!

Although she struggled to block, how could she compare in close combat to a Fiendgod Refiner like Xiamang Qi? Instantly, his right arm, still emanating that terrifying black aura, pierced directly through her flank, and the terrifying venoms instantly invaded her entire body, causing her face to instantly turn a deathly dark gray color.

Chapter 16: The Seventh Stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]

Yu Wei understood that she was at a true life-and-death juncture. Her body suddenly flashed with a bloody light, forming into a blood-colored taiji symbol.

Swish!

Yu Wei transformed into a streak of blood light, retreating more than three hundred meters before collapsing to the ground. She spat out a mouthful of black-colored blood, a savage, jagged wound in her flank that was filled with black blood.

Ji Ning watched this all happen. His senior apprentice-sister had been stabbed through the flank by Xiamang Qi's palm. She had spat out blood, then collapsed to the ground. This caused Ning's eyes to instantly turn red.

A surge of uncontrollable rage and terror instantly filled his entire soul.

“AAAAAHHHHH!!!!” Ning let out a massive howl, and a limitless bloodlust instantly filled every part of his spirit.

Kill! Kill! Kill!

Kill them all!

Kill all who oppose him!

“Angry, eh? Won't do you any good.” The dirty-looking maiden continued to tie down Ning, seeming quite entertained.

“CHOP!” Ning let out an enraged howl. This howl emerged from the deepest parts of his soul, from the innermost depths of his spirit.

The three-headed, six-armed Ji Ning simultaneously struck out with all six swords, and six enormous streaks of sword-light immediately shone with incomparable brilliance. They transformed into six strings of line... the sword-light had been compressed into lines! There was nothing capable of stopping Ning...he was going to chop through all which stood

in front of him!

He had never felt such a desire to kill. He had never before felt so determined.

The more than ten thousand life-and-death battles he had engaged in over the past year had been even more effective for improving his insights than the past ten years. The [Three-Foot Sword], which Immortal Northwalker had imprinted deep into Ning's soul many years ago, once more arose. A limitless, terrifying killing intent...determination which no one would withstand at all...an sword-heart that was completely enlightened...many former insights...they all combined together, allowing Ning to immediately execute the seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].

The seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – Horizontal Sword Execution! 1

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whosh!

Six rays of silken lines of sword light sliced through the body of the dirty-looking maiden. When the first sword descended, her face began to change...because the first sword actually chopped straight through her hand, cutting it off. Her body, as tough as a magic treasure, was completely unable to block this fierce, sharp sword-light.

“RETREAT!” The dirty-looking maiden no longer appeared as relaxed as she had earlier; in fact, she even seemed slightly frightened as she frantically retreated.

Whoosh! As her hand was chopped off, a massive wound appeared on her chest as well.

However, she did managed to actually retreat. Her Fiendgod-like body frantically healed as she stared towards Ning in both terror and rage. “Sword-light compressed into silken lines! He’s actually reached this level!”

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“Sword-light like silk!”

"He's only trained for thirty years, right? He's actually reached the level of sword-light like silk...he truly is a rare genius of the Dao of the Sword!"

"He truly does have a chance to make it all the way to the top position of this Conclave. I imagine that even Xiamang Zishan is inferior to him."

Within the Skylight Palace, the nine Pure Yang True Immortals and the thousand Celestial Immortals were all stunned by this. They all began to let out sighs of amazement and chatter amongst each other.

Sword-light like silk...

This meant that a person had already treached a truly, incomparably high level of attainment in the Dao of the Sword. The seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], 'Horizontal Sword Execution', was at the level of 'sword-light like silk'.

Actually, each of the final three stances of the [Three-Foot Sword] were more terrifying than the last. The seventh, the eighth, the ninth...they were so formidable that not even Immortal Northwalker was able to record them down in books.

For the first six stances of the [Three-Foot Sword], it could be said that one would advance through them in an ordinary fashion, all the way until one reached the Grand Dao Domain level. The increase in power between each stance wouldn't be too great, because these six stances focused on an orderly sort of improvement; they were primarily meant for guiding and teaching, which was why they could be compiled into books. Naturally, the level of improvement between each stance would be a bit smaller, which would make it easier to train.

But those final three stances which could not be recorded down in any books...there was a truly explosive increase in power between each of the three stances.

The seventh stance represented that a person had reached a level that was comparable to the techniques of a Loose Immortal who had trained for three hundred thousand years.

The eighth stance was comparable to the technique of an ordinary

Celestial Immortal.

The ninth stance was comparable to the techniques of an absolutely supreme Celestial Immortal!

It was because of the ninth stance that Immortal Northwalker, despite being a Loose Immortal, was comparable to a true Celestial Immortal!

These three stances...there was a huge gap in power between each of them, but each of them were tremendously powerful.

Yu Wei lay there, struggling to control her magic treasures to form into the white phoenix and black phoenix. At the same time, she produced a jade bottle, shattered it with her elemental ki, then swallowed a pill into her mouth.

Rumble...the wound in her flank began to rapidly heal.

“Myriad Hibernating Venoms.” Yu Wei knew that this was going to be trouble.

The Myriad Hibernating Venoms was a divine ability which the Black-White College had as well. However, the imperial Xiamang clan had countless divine abilities in its Dao Repository, amongst which was the Myriad Hibernating Venoms. Xiamang Qi trained in this technique!

The Myriad Hibernating Venoms was an extremely deadly, poisonous art; it required one to fuse a large amount of strange poisons into one's own body. Xiamang Qi, as a genius of the imperial clan, naturally was able to easily procure many hard-to-find poisons. Thus, his Myriad Hibernating Venoms was exceptionally vicious. Anything he touched would be instantly poisoned.

A Fiendgod Body Refiner might not fear him too much, but Yu Wei was a Ki Refiner; her body's defensive and recuperative power was insufficient, and she had to rely on pills. But pills that could suppress the dire venom of the Myriad Hibernating Venoms...Yu Wei had none of those precious pills at all.

“Die!” The distant Xiamang Qi howled with laughter, but as he did, a golden sword-light suddenly flew towards him; it was the light of the

[Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

“Although the power of this sword-light is significant, it’s not enough to do anything to me.” Xiamang Qi had already withstood it several times; this time, he once more swung his arms out as he chopped out with his warblade towards it.

Swish!

The sword-light was as fine as silk, but it carried an incomparably powerful force. Xiamang Qi was caught completely off-guard, and his warblade was instantly knocked flying away. The skin between his thumb and forefinger was split apart, and he himself was knocked backwards. However, Ning suddenly charged towards him at an utterly astonishing speed, and so Xiamang Qi hurriedly produced yet another warblade in his hands.

“Die.” The three-headed, six-armed Ning appeared incomparably savage. Six rays of sword-light struck out like a giant windmill of light. Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!!!!!! Six consecutive rays of sword-light came howling down.

Xiamang Qi stared, eyes bulging. He was instantly chopped apart into small chunks of meat.

A Waterflame Lotus suddenly bloomed, surrounding the chunks of meat and grinding down at them.

“No...” Xiamang Qi’s soul was howling. Bu unfortunately...he was ground to death, until nothing remained.

“What!?” Adept Danzhu, Adept Snowfly, and Kindwater Qi were all shocked. Xiamang Qi had been killed in a single exchange!? This level of power was too great! How could Ji Ning’s power have increased so explosively in just an instant!?

“All of you should die.” Ning immediately turned and threw himself at Adept Snowfly, who was the closest to him.

“Quick, flee!” Adept Danzhu, Adept Snowfly, and Kindwater Qi, upon seeing how savage and ferocious Ning was, didn’t dare to take him on at

all. They immediately fled at high speed.

“Open.” The bald, black-skinned Adept Blackstone, who had been controlling the grand sealing formation this entire time, quickly withdrew the formation.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Adept Danzhu, Adept Snowfly, and Kindwater Qi all immediately charged out of the formation. As soon as they did, Adept Blackstone, with a single thought, once more activated the formation. The barrier of light arose once more.

“Open up!” Ning howled. His sword-light was like silk, and six streams of silken light chopped towards the grand sealing formation.

BOOM!

The grand formation was immediately torn apart, and the three-headed, six-armed Ji Ning charged out from within it.

“What?!” Adept Snowfly, who had just let out a sigh of relief after leaving the formation, was completely shocked. She immediately turned to flee...but how could her speed comparable to that of Ning, a Fiendgod Body Refiner? Although she hurriedly brandished her flywhisk to defend, transforming it into tens of thousands of tightly clustered strings that formed into a strange white fox to defend her, she also threw out a large number of talismans. She frantically sent to Ning, “Take my talismans, spare my life!”

Whoosh whoosh whoosh...six more streams of sword-light came. They chopped straight through the white fox, chopping Adept Snowfly to death.

It was too fast.

The three-headed, six-armed Ning’s sword-light was so fast that there wasn’t even enough time for Adept Snowfly to be teleported away after throwing out her talismans. She was immediately killed by Ning.

Kindwater Qi and Adept Danzhu were both terrified by Ning’s savagery.

Adept Danzhu was formidable, but she was a Ki Refiner...how could she possibly summon the courage to fight Ning to the death?

Swish! Swish!

Kindwater Qi and Adept Danzhu both flew far away, fleeing into the distance.

As for the bald, black-skinned Adept Blackstone, he collected his grand sealing formation. The dirty-looking maiden, Adept Ninedeaths, was standing by his side. She was now wearing a pair of silver gloves on her hands.

“Let’s go. This isn’t the time for us to be fighting with him to the death,” Adept Blackstone sent mentally.

Adept Ninedeaths gritted her teeth, giving Ning a glare.

“Let’s go.”

The two were quite decisive in their actions; they realized that Ning’s power had already reached a level where it posed a threat to them. They were not confident in actually beating him in a fight to the death, and they already had enough talismans; it wasn’t worth it for them to risk it.

Swoosh! Swoosh! The two quickly departed.

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The enraged Ning had slaughtered Xiamang Qi and Adept Snowfly, then scared off Kindwater Qi and Adept Danzhu as well as caused Adept Ninedeaths and Adept Blackstone to choose to temporarily retreat as well.

“Hmph.” Ning, still filled with a boundless killing intent, swept the area with his gaze. He collected the treasures which Adept Snowfly had left behind, then quickly ran towards his senior apprentice-sister. Upon reaching her side, he immediately returned to his normal form.

“Senior apprentice-sister.” Ning saw that Yu Wei’s face was so dark, it was almost black. She had been very badly poisoned. He couldn’t help but begin to grow frantic. As for Yu Wei, she forced herself to sit up, then smiled as she looked at Ning.

Ning had seen everything; it had been Xiamang Qi who had used the divine ability, 'Myriad Hibernating Venoms'. This divine ability was one which the giant yellow bear of the underwater estate had forbidden him from training in; although it was quite formidable when the practitioner was weak, once the practitioner grew strong, he'd probably actually have to spend some effort in purging the poisons from his body.

But...it had to be said that this was an extremely terrifying divine ability at this level. Anyone who was touched would immediately be poisoned and see their power drastically lowered!

"I have antivenoms here. They might be able to suppress..." Ning was extremely frantic.

"It's fine. I'm fine." Yu Wei sat there, looking at Ning. She smiled, then shook her head gently. When she saw how crazed Ning had become, she actually felt a blissful feeling in her heart.

Ning, seeing the shape his senior apprentice-sister was in, couldn't help but feel pained for her as well as feel frightened.

Forgetting everything else, he immediately took her into her arms.

Yu Wei allowed Ning to hold her. She rested her head against his neck. She could sense the warmth surging from Ning's body, an almost boiling heat that actually startled her.

"I don't want to hesitate any longer." Ning gently murmured into her ears, "I don't want to feel any regrets. No regrets. I was truly afraid...afraid that you were dead. If you were dead...would I keep hesitating?"

Yu Wei reached out as well, tightly clinging to Ning as she revealed a smile on her face. Her tears began to fall down.

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

Lu Dongbin suddenly slapped his table, the force of the blow causing the Immortal wine in front of him to be knocked flying. He jumped to his feet, then pointed towards the portion of the enormous Brightmoon

Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers where Ning was holding Yu Wei. He roared with laughter, “That’s how it should be! That’s exactly how it should be! What’s the point of being so squeamish and indecisive? If they missed this opportunity, they would never have a chance to be together again for the rest of their lives. They had to seize this opportunity! If you have the right feelings, then you should act on them! You’ve been fighting in so many life-and-death battles together; how could you not have understood your own hearts? How could you have even hesitated for so long? Bahahaha, but now it’s all better. In the final month, they are finally embracing.”

*

1. In Chinese, the original is literally ‘one-character sword execution’ – the character for the letter 1 in Chinese is just a horizontal line: —

Chapter 17: I Will Never Hurt You

The Xia Emperor, Sovereign Hao, and the others all stared as Lu Dongbin slapped his table so hard, he sent the Immortal wine flying everywhere. They couldn't help but feel speechless.

Lu Dongbin, you are one of the most awe-inspiringly famous figures of the Three Realms. Countless schools located throughout the three thousand major worlds and the trillion minor worlds all venerate you as 'Patriarch Lu'. Is it really appropriate for you to get so excited over a bit of romance between a pair of young Wanxiang-level fellows? This is at most a spot of entertainment; why must you be so excited?

Still...they all understood that this was precisely Lu Dongbin's temperament. He loved to wander the mortal realms, and absolutely delighted in paying attention to the love stories of minor figures as well as playing the role of the Moon Elder as a matchmaker.

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The imperial citadel plaza. The disciples of the Black-White College were staring at the massive Diagram in midair, feeling incomparably nervous.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, quick, QUICK! YES! Kill them! KILL THEM ALL!" Mu Northson was incomparably agitated as he stared at the explosively savage Ji Ning within the Diagram.

"Quick, quick!" Immortal Fivecraze watched anxiously as well...and in the end, he finally let out a sigh of relief. "Fortunately, Xiamang Qi was only a Wanxiang Adept as well; although his Myriad Hibernating Venoms is powerful, by relying on some pills, its effects can be suppressed for a short while, at least."

"Whaaaaat?!"

Northson, Little Qing, the Whitewater Hound, Immortal Fivecraze, Adept Vastriver, Northmont Baiwei, and the others all suddenly stared with bulging eyes.

Because...

Ji Ning and Yu Wei were actually embracing!

“But but but...” Northson actually began to stammer.

“Master...and Miss Yu Wei...” Little Qing was completely flabbergasted as well.

Northmont Baiwei was the first to recover. Roaring with laughter, he slapped his thigh. “My brother Ji Ning truly is formidable. In the Conclave of Immortal Destiny’s trial within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers...he actually is going to be returning with a beauty in his arms.”

“Right!” Immortal Fivecraze shook his head a few times, feeling extremely delighted. “The Black-White College is going to be the talk of the world for some time now!”

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Ninelotus watched this silently. She felt as though the entire world had turned still.

“He ended up with senior apprentice-sister after all.”

“It’s for the best.”

“I am myself. He is himself! Only...should I hope that the two will forever be together and forever be blissful...or should I hope that they will separate as well?” Ninelotus wanted to offer them her prayers, but while searching in her own heart...she found that deep inside her heart, for some reason she couldn’t explain, she still felt a strange sort of hope. Hope that Ning and Yu Wei would separate as well.

Ninelotus was an Immortal cultivator who understood her own heart; she immediately analyzed and realized what she was feeling. She quietly said to herself, “It is said that the trial of emotions is the most difficult trial to overcome...although I have already comprehended my own heart, whenever I see Ji Ning, waves always once more appear upon the lake of my heart. If I wish to be able to walk further on the path of Immortal

cultivation, then I should never meet him again."

"It will be better for him. It will be better for me as well." Ninelotus made up her mind. After this Conclave of Immortal Destiny concluded, she would return to the Dongyan clan. Unless there was an absolutely pressing need, she would absolutely never meet Ning again.

The nearby Dongyan Forefather glanced sideways at Ninelotus, seated by his side. He saw the look in her eyes.

A look of determination!

The Dongyan Forefather shook his head gently. He had not desired for things between Ning and Ninelotus to end up like this. However...this was Ninelotus' decision, born from her heart. He would not interfere.

Within the Diagram.

Yu Wei was tightly embracing Ning. She could feel the warmth from his body, and she could feel a sense of bliss that came with it. It had been a long, long time since she had felt this sort of bliss. Far too long. Even in her past life, as a child, she had known this bliss for just a brief period of time. Now, she once more felt this sense of bliss and contentment. This caused uncontrollable tears to streak down her face.

She moved slightly, clutching Ning even more tightly to her. In her mind, she couldn't help but think back to that terrifying figure from her memories of her past life, that figure which caused her heart to tremble with fear. Yu Wei bit her lips, bit them so hard that blood appeared. In her heart, she quietly said to herself, "I swear that even if it means that I, Yu Wei, will have my soul be shattered...I will never hurt you. Never!"

After making up her decision, Yu Wei actually relaxed. Now that she was mentally prepared for her soul to be destroyed, the knot in her heart had been resolved.

"My man." Yu Wei revealed a smile on her face.

Ning held Yu Wei in his arms, smelling the fragrance that came from her body. The feathery down on her clothings around her neck rubbed against his face. Ning felt calmer than he ever had before. It had been a

long time since he had felt so calm. He could feel that the heart of this woman before him was extremely close to his own. It was as though the two of them were one.

“From today onwards,” Ning whispered words gently into Yu Wei’s ears, words that sounded like a sort of promise, “Yu Wei, you shall be my woman.”

“And you’ll be mine as well,” Yu Wei replied softly.

The two could both sense each other’s hearts.

You are willing to die for me.

I am willing to die for you.

In the future, we shall walk the Immortal path together, never leaving or separating.

“Yu Wei.” Ning released Yu Wei, looking at the deathly dark pallor to her face. He said with concern, “You’ve been badly poisoned?”

“The poisons of the Myriad Hibernating Venoms are very unique.” Yu Wei gently shook her head. “The pills I have on me only suffice to temporarily suppress them for two to four hours. To actually cure the poison, I would either need an incomparably precious Immortal pill that could resolve countless poisons, or a spirit-pill that was specially designed to dissolve the poisons of this divine ability. There’s no way I can do this from within the world of the Diagram. I have to leave.”

Ning gritted his teeth. He and Yu Wei had been on the verge of passing the trial, but she now had to depart. If the poison wasn’t cured, then once it was no longer suppressed, she would die.

“Enough. Don’t be unhappy.” Yu Wei smiled as she looked at Ning, contentment in her eyes. “To ‘win’ you here is better than winning any other award in the Conclave.”

“Right.” Although Ning wanted to continue to be together with Yu Wei, he immediately said, “Hurry up and cure your poison. It won’t be so easily cured, so don’t dawdle.”

“This is the imperial capital of the Grand Xia, and there are countless experts gathered outside. It won’t be too hard.” Yu Wei nodded. “Take my talismans.”

Whoosh. Instantly, a large number of talismans appeared on the ground.

Yu Wei looked at Ning.

Rumble...

An invisible ripple of power descended, teleporting Yu Wei away.

Ning collected the talismans. Actually, the number of talismans he had acquired after killing Xiamang Qi and Adept Snowfly was more than enough to allow himself and Yu Wei to pass the trial. But she had been poisoned by the Myriad Hibernating Venoms...she had to leave and have it cured.

Swoosh!

Ning took a single step forward, then disappeared as a streak of light.

Within the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

The nine Pure Yang True Immortals were all staring at the Diagram.

“This Yu Wei girl is coming out. Xiamang, have her be teleported over here,” Lu Dongbin immediately said.

The Xia Emperor, seated on his imperial throne, simply smiled.

Whoosh!

A black-robed woman whose skin was as lustrous as white jade and who was roughly 1.7 meters tall by Earth measurements suddenly appeared within the main hall of the Skylight Palace, right next to the nine Pure Yang True Immortals.

“Eh?!” Yu Wei stared at her surroundings, immediately poleaxed.

The Xia Emperor was seated on high atop his throne. The other Pure Yang True Immortals who were seated with him hadn’t suppressed their auras, and so naturally their auras rippled out...causing absolute terror in

Yu Wei. She had seen Celestial Immortals in her past life, and not just one; these figures before her gave her the semse of tremendous power. They absolutely were not Celestial Immortals.

Yu Wei looked backwards and saw nearly a thousand Celestial Immortals. Their auras were similarly shocking.

“Yu Wei, disciple of the Black-White College, prostrates before you, your Imperial Majesty.” Yu Wei immediately fell to her knees with tremendous respect.

“Quite clever.” The Xia Emperor laughed and praised her. “Arise.”

Lu Dongbin was staring at Yu Wei with interest. Actually, the other eight Pure Yang True Immortals present rather looked down on Yu Wei; she was nothing more than a reincarnated female Immortal. The only one intrigued by her was Lu Dongbin.

“Little girl.” Lu Dongbin tossed her a gourd of wine, sending it flying towards Yu Wei. Yu Wei immediately caught it, her eyes filled with puzzlement.

“Drink it,” Lu Dongbin instructed. Yu Wei stared at the gourd of wine in her hands. Although she was restless and nervous, she knew that there was no way she could refuse. She immediately lifted up the gourd of wine and gulped it all down. The sight of her lifting up her neck and drinking the wine was extremely pretty; however, her neck and her face were a bit black. Slowly, however, the color of her neck and face began to change, beginning to turn pale. Moments later, Yu Wei had transformed from a gray-skinned girl to a white-skinned girl.

“My poison...?” Yu Wei was extremely startled. The poison in her body was no ordinary poison...but just by drinking some wine, it had been dissolved?

“Little girl, this Immortal nectar which you just drank was no ordinary wine. It came from the Xia Emperor’s private stash, and he rarely brings it out. Usually, not even Celestial Immortals will have a chance to drink it. This was specially prepared by the Xia Emperor for Lu Dongbin.” The Immortal Elder of the Northlands chortled as he spoke.

Yu Wei immediately knelt down in gratitude.

“No need. It was just a gourd of wine.” Lu Dongbin seemed quite indifferent. “Alright, you can go now.”

“Go?” Yu Wei stared at the vast Skylight Palace. Behind here were nearly a thousand Celestial Immortals who were split into two lines that stretched far off into the distance!

Yu Wei actually didn’t know where to go for now.

“Go sit down next to King Yan,” the Xia Emperor instructed.

“Yes.” Only now did Yu Wei feel a bit relaxed. When she had scanned the room earlier, she saw Yuchi Xiyue seated behind King Yan.

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Yu Wei, her thoughts in a confused jumble, walked before King Yan, then sat down behind next, close to Yuchi Xiyue. All of the Celestial Immortals present stared at the black-robed maiden. They had all personally witnessed Lu Dongbin bestow a gourd of wine upon her. All of the Celestial Immortals present knew of the legendary Lu Dongbin, but almost none of them had ever spoken with him before.

“Who is this little girl? She was actually able to chat with Patriarch Lu.”

“No clue.”

“She should be from the Black-White College; that Ji Ning is from the Black-White College.”

The Celestial Immortals were all chatting amongst themselves regarding this.

Yu Wei was now seated behind King Yan, next to Yuchi Xiyue.

“Yu Wei, you are so amazing.” Xiyue sent an excited mental message to her. “You were actually able to chat with Patriarch Lu. Not even my grandfather has ever spoken to Patriarch Lu before.”

“Yeah...” Yu Wei was still in a dazed state. She had heard of Lu Dongbin even in her past life. He was one of the most famous experts of the Three

Realms.

“Right. You and Ji Ning have chosen each other to be life partners?”

Princess Xiyue’s eyes were shining brightly. As Ning’s cousin, she naturally paid tremendous attention to this.

Yu Wei’s face instantly became slightly red and bashful, but she still nodded and sent back, “Right.” However, in her heart, Yu Wei felt a bit nervous. This was because the outside world had long buzzed with rumors that Princess Xiyue liked Ji Ning very much. It was said that it was Princess Xiyue who had led Ji Ning into King Yan’s Estate when he had just arrived at the imperial capital, and that it was because of her that King Yan treated him so kindly!

He was nothing more than a genius. Think about who King Yan was! If it wasn’t for Princess Xiyue, how could he have sent his Golden Imperials out to protect Ji Ning?

Everyone believed that Princess Xiyue must have fallen for Ji Ning! Even many members of the Black-White College believed this, and this was Yu Wei’s guess as well.

“Has Princess Xiyue truly fallen for Ji Ning as well? Is she going to be angry at me?” Yu Wei was feeling worried.

“WONDERFUL!” Princess Xiyue was absolutely delighted and excited. “Yu Wei, you need to take good care of Ji Ning. Ideally, you would immediately have his babies!”

Chapter 18: The Year Ends

Within the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers.

The hazy glow of the moon shone down upon the land. By the side of a river, Ning was seated in the lotus position, a simple bewildering formation having been laid down long ago.

Slash...

Streaks of silken sword-light howled about the region. Sword-light criss-crossed everywhere with astonishing power.

Ning had comprehended the seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – ‘Horizontal Sword Execution’. As a result, he had reached the level of silken sword-light. He had also finally gotten together with Yu Wei, and as a result was in extremely high spirits. His Dao-heart was incomparably pure and comprehended, and his heart was currently calm and peaceful, without a hint of rage or hate poisoning his soul at all.

Generally speaking, after making a breakthrough, one would need to stabilize one’s foundations. Ning was doing this right now, focusing his heart on the Dao of the Sword. Naturally, one thread of enlightenment after another was filling his heart.

“Within the heart, each person has their own desires, their own obsessions.”

“The stronger the obsession, the sharper the sword.”

“What I ask for...”

“Is to be carefree and unrestrained!”

Ning spoke these words silently to himself.

What did it mean to be carefree and unrestrained? It meant to be able to protect those that you loved. It meant being free from the threats of others. It meant having your destiny in your own hands!

“This...is my Dao of the Sword.”

“All those who oppose my Dao shall be slaughtered!”

Ning’s eyes flashed like lightning.

Whoosh!

Sword-light flew everywhere in an invincible, dominating fashion. The sword-intent contained within it was so powerful, it had reached a height which Ning had never before reached! Every single Sword Immortal had their own sword-heart. There were evil Sword Immortals, arrogant and solitary Sword Immortals, carefree and unrestrained sword...and they all continued to advance in accordance with their own sword-hearts. If they were to hesitate, to be puzzled, to be confused...then their sword-intents would grow weak. Their sword-intents would no longer be pure, and the power of their sword would constantly drop.

“The [Three-Foot Sword] of Immortal Northwalker...it desires to be ‘joyful’. Better to live joyfully for a day, than to live a century while stifled.”

“My [Three-Foot Sword], however, desires to be carefree and unrestrained! To be joyful is only one part of being carefree and unrestrained; to be carefree and unrestrained is to surpass, to surpass the bounds of the Three Realms, to possess invincible power. Only then can one truly do as one pleases.”

Ning understood the difference between himself and Immortal Northwalker.

Immortal Northwalker was a Loose Immortal; it was guaranteed that he would eventually perish under the increasingly powerful Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations. Thus, the sword art of Immortal Northwalker was a sort of savagery that came after a person knew that he was going to die. No matter who opposed him, he would kill, kill, kill! He would exterminate all injustices, exterminate all those who deserve killing. All he asked for was to be joyful. He didn’t give a damn how powerful one’s backer was; he would still slaughter you!

But in reality...precisely because he knew that he was going to die, Immortal Northwalker’s [Three-Foot Sword] was excessively savage.

When one went too far into an extreme, one's sword art would actually lessen in power.

Ning had comprehended profound mysteries of the Dao of the Sword through the [Three-Foot Sword], but his sword-intent was his alone. It formed into a [Three-Foot Sword] that belonged to himself and only himself.

In truth, Immortal Northwalker understood this issue as well. This was why when each time the [Three-Foot Sword] was transmitted to an heir, the heir would form a [Three-Foot Sword] of their own.

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Ning wielded the Darknorth Swords in his hands. He had the feeling of being one with the sword as he strode forth through the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers.

“Someone travelling by himself? Let’s go. Surround him.”

Instantly, three figures came howling through the air. One of them executed a secret art, and a dense cluster of crows flew out, quickly and completely surrounding Ning.

Ning...actually just smiled.

Swish! Ning suddenly moved. His entire body crackled with lightning, and he moved forward with the speed of a Roc and the unpredictability of a ghost, constantly darting and flashing about. His sword-light flew through the air, like thin silken strands. Countless crows were instantly sliced apart, transforming into one spike-type magic treasure after another. And then, like a completely unpredictable ghost, he moved to attack those three.

“Who is this?! He’s too fast!”

“Careful!”

“Argh!”

Although Ning hadn’t used the [Starseizing Hand], [Heavenly Transformation], or [Three Heads, Six Arms], having only executed the

[Pentabolt Vajra] and the [Windwing Evasion], just by relying on these two divine abilities he was still able to explode forth with enough speed and power to deal with them. He wasn't trying to completely crush these people; he was using them to train and refine his sword art.

Sword-light flashed everywhere, beating the three into utterly sorry sights. All they could do was use all their power to try and stay alive as they started to flee.

"He's too fast, and his sword arts are too formidable."

"And he's a Fiendgod Body Refiner, but hasn't even used the [Heavenly Transformation]. I refuse to believe he doesn't even know that divine ability!"

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Ning continued to stroll forward.

In this final month within the Diagram, he spread out his divine sense with abandon as he searched for opponents, engaging in one battle after another.

Against weaker Ki Refiners, he wouldn't use the [Heavenly Transformation].

Against tougher foes, he would rely on [Heavenly Transformation].

Against a group of tougher foes...he would use his full power, as well as the [Starseizing Hand]!

In short, Ning was fast, had a savage sword, and was tremendously strong...he wandered the Diagram as he pleased. He didn't care about how many people joined forces against him; he would kill, kill, kill them all as he continued to roam forward! After all, by now, everyone was in a small squad. If things were like they had been back at the very start, with the possibility of hundreds of people joining forces against him, Ning wouldn't have dared to be so bold.

But right now...

There were very few still alive!

That being said, the survivors were all true monsters. Ning used them to temper his sword arts; the sword was a weapon of battle, and in battle his sword arts rose in power with great speed. Ning fused both the Dao-Path of Rainwater and his Dao-Path of the Inferno into his Dao of the Sword; it was hard when it needed to be hard and soft when it should be soft. He was now significantly more powerful than back when he had killed Xiamang Qi and Adept Snowfly.

The people in the imperial citadel's plaza all sighed repeatedly with incomparable amazement. Only two hundred or so individuals were left in the Diagram, and each of them were peerless monsters...but there were still a few that shone with particular splendor.

One of them was Ji Ning!

"Ji Ning's sword arts are improving at a simply astonishing pace. He's far more powerful than he was when he first entered the Diagram. Now, in the entire world of the Diagram...he should be one of the most powerful."

"As I see it, Ji Ning can become number one in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny!"

"He's only trained for thirty years; how can he be so powerful?!"

"Monster, what a monster!"

"This Ji Ning was born to be a Sword Immortal! After only thirty years, he has already reached such a level; I've trained for thirty thousand years, but am inferior to him. What a damn waste of my life!"

"In the entire Conclave, as far as sword arts go....Ji Ning is definitely number one!"

The individuals who had come from the 3600 commanderies and four seas were all chatting amongst themselves.

There was no question whatsoever that of the hundred thousand-plus who had entered this Conclave, Ning was the number one Sword Immortal! After all, those few who were on his level, such as Xiamang Zishan, Adept Ninedeaths, Adept Blackstone, and the Sloppy Daoist were

not Sword Immortals. Sword Immortals were extremely skilled in attacking, and so naturally there were many who believed that Ning would become number one in this tournament.

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

Patriarch Arcanum seemed to have quite an unpleasant taste in his mouth. Although it was true that the Youngflame clan had the extremely powerful Youngflame Zhan, who was comparable to Xiamang Zishan...in the world of the Diagram, Youngflame Zhan wasn't as brilliant or as eye-catching as Ji Ning was.

"This Ji Ning..." Patriarch Arcanum ground his teeth.

"The more of a talented monster he is, the more he needs to be eradicated!"

"Hmph. I'll let you act smugly for now. You are nothing more than a genius in a Conclave. There's a Conclave every three centuries. I can't even count how many times a Conclave has gone on...but how many of the winners end up being Celestial Immortals?" Patriarch Arcanum mused silently to himself, "If you can't become a Celestial Immortal, in the end you'll never be able to step out onto the grand stage."

"The Xia Emperor cares deeply about this Conclave, and quite a few Pure Yang True Immortals are watching as well. However, they are doing nothing more than just watching; after all, consider how exalted a status True Immortals have! They are experts of the Three Realms who definitely will not choose apprentices casually. They shouldn't decide to accept Ji Ning as a disciple, right? So long as the True Immortals don't take him as apprentice...once the chance comes, I'll definitely exterminate him."

Patriarch Arcanum felt an extremely intense desire to kill.

He had truly felt love for Youngflame Nong, and he truly wanted to avenge him! In addition, the feud between the Youngflame clan and Ning was by now an enormous one; after all, the Youngflame clan had even

sent Deathsworn to assassinate him. If Ji Ning truly did spread his wings one day...how could he not desire to take revenge?

Given how much monstrous talent he had displayed in this Conclave... how could Ji Ning be permitted to continue to grow like this?

He had to be eradicated!

But of course...if a Pure Yang True Immortal really did accept Ji Ning as his disciple, then Patriarch Arcanum would have no choice but to swallow this bitter fruit.

“Generally speaking, the number of disciples a Pure Yang True Immortal accepts can be counted on one hand. They definitely will not casually accept new apprentices.” Patriarch Arcanum quietly hoped that none of the True Immortals would suddenly reach out and take on Ji Ning as a disciple. If that happened...he would truly be stupefied.

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Ning sat in the lotus position atop the mountain peak.

Suddenly...

“The year has ended. The eighty contestants with the most talismans have successfully passed the trial of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers.” The voice of the Emperor of the Grand Xia suddenly rang out in the minds of every single person present within the Diagram.

With it, a rumbling sound could be heard...

Rays of golden light shot out to surround Ji Ning, Xiamang Zishan, Adept Ninedeaths, the Sloppy Daoist, and the rest of the eighty. Some were seated in the lotus position, others were walking around, and still others were sleeping. In short, all of their bodies were surrounded by golden light; clearly, the light was meant to let the people in the outside world be able to clearly see who the eighty were.

Swish, swish, swish!

The eighty were all immediately teleported out of the world of the

Diagram.

“The 159 of you who remain must engage in the final battle. Only sixteen of you are permitted to remain alive within the world of the Diagram.” The voice of the Emperor of the Grand Xia reverberated in each of their minds...and then all 159 of them were teleported to a vast, spacious grassland.

A grand sealing formation appeared on the grassland, spanning a hundred kilometers.

All 159 of them were locked within the sealing formation.

They all looked towards their fellow contestants.

“Start killing,” boomed the voice of the Emperor of the Grand Xia.

Instantly, the 159 competitors within the grand sealing formation began a berserk, final struggle against each other. This was a very small region of just a hundred kilometers; to people like them, who could move a hundred kilometers with a single movement...and with so many of them present...the battle here was exceptionally fierce and miserable. Many people were forced to voluntarily throw out their talismans and give up.

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The clouds in front of the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

Ji Ning and the rest of the eighty all appeared atop the cloud. They looked at each other.

“Eh?” Ning quickly saw quite a few familiar faces; Xiamang Zishan, Cangwu Jiu, Adept Blackstone...

“Senior apprentice-brother.” Ning saw the Sloppy Daoist as well.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” The Sloppy Daoist beamed as well.

“The eighty of you, all stand up!” An attendant wearing a crown spoke out to them coldly: “The other sixteen will appear shortly, at which point the ninety-six of you will jointly follow me to go pay your respects to his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor. This time, some Pure Yang True Immortals of the Three Realms have also arrived to watch. All of you

need to know what the rules are; no matter what, you cannot offend or disturb one of the True Immortals."

The crowned attendant had a pale, beardless face. He had an insidiously cold aura, and Ning and the others could tell from the invisible ripples of power that radiated from the man that this person...was most likely a Celestial Immortal.

This caused Ning and the others to all secretly sigh in amazement.

It was possible that not one of the hundred thousand-plus competitors would become a Celestial Immortal...but this attendant was one. This instantly caused Ning and the others to feel an invisible pressure push down upon them.

Chapter 19: The Conclave of Immortal Destiny's Awards

After a long period of time passed, another sixteen figures appeared atop the clouds. Most of these sixteen appeared to be in quite the sorry shape, and most of them were heavily wounded.

“Everyone is present.” The crowned attendant wave his arm, and instantly a rainbow-colored drizzle descended from the heavens onto Ning and the rest of the ninety-six. The rainbow raindrops quickly merged into their bodies, and the heavily wounded all saw their injuries immediately repaired, leaving them in perfect condition. Even those who had exhausted much of their divine power and elemental ki due to having battled for a long period of time saw their energy replenished. This caused Ning and the others to all feel stunned.

“Remember. The main hall of the Skylight Palace currently has nearly a thousand Celestial Immortals, his Imperial Majesty the Emperor, and Pure Yang True Immortals who have gathered from various places throughout the Three Realms. You absolutely must not be careless. If you anger a true True Immortal who takes your life on the spot, don’t say I didn’t warn you!” The crowned attendant swept his gaze past the ninety-six, pausing very slightly as he glanced at the Sloppy Daoist, whom he actually revealed a hint of a smile towards.

“Obey my commands. Let’s move,” the crowned attendant ordered.

He led the way up ahead. Ning and the other ninety-six followed from behind, walking through the clouds. They quickly arrived at a wide, spacious palace hall. The main hall of the Skylight Palace had no ceiling; above it was the infinitely vast firmament.

“So many Celestial Immortals.” Ning immediately saw the two rows of Celestial Immortals. They stretched all the way to the deepest parts of the main hall; there truly were nearly a thousand.

“In Stillwater Commandery, I didn’t even see a single Celestial Immortal

Patriarch, but today I've seen so many. I imagine that the entire Grand Xia Empire must have several thousand Celestial Immortals. No wonder it is said that the emperor of a major world is capable of sitting down and speaking with the Celestial Emperor as equals." Ning could sense the ripples of power coming from around him. The ripples that emanated from a Celestial Immortal, even when they were not actively flaring their power, was still enough to cause a Wanxiang Adept like Ning to feel tremendous pressure.

"Hmph!" Patriarch Arcanum was seated there. Upon seeing Ning walk past him, his long, narrow eyes flashed with a hint of coldness. He let out a cold snort, not disguising his hostility towards Ning at all.

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"Halt." The crowned attendant sent a mental message to Ning and the others, who all immediately came to a halt.

Right in front of them, not too far away, were the eight Pure Yang True Immortals and the Emperor of the Grand Xia. Ning and the others could tell that the auras emanating from those eight figures next to the Emperor of the Grand Xia were simply too terrifying. In addition, the tables and Immortal nectar placed before them were completely different from those given the Celestial Immortals. They could immediately tell who these eight were.

"They are all Pure Yang True Immortals!" Ning and the rest of the ninety-six all felt as though they were looking up at unfathomably exalted figures.

"All of you, kneel," the crowned attendant sent mentally.

Whoosh.

Ning and the rest of the ninety-six all fell to their knees, calling out at the same time, "We prostrate ourselves before you, your Imperial Majesty."

The Emperor of the Grand Xia looked downwards towards them, and his gaze along with the gazes of the eight Pure Yang True Immortals all

landed upon the Sloppy Daoist. To these nine Pure Yang True Immortals, the only person worth them paying serious attention to was the Sloppy Daoist. This was because he was the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

As for the others?

The nine of them didn't hold them in too much regard. The only reason they paid even a slight bit of attention to them was because the Three Realms was entering turbulent times. During one of the 'normal' Conclaves of Immortal Destiny, they wouldn't even be bothered to come attend and watch, nor would the Emperor of the Grand Xia come to officiate. The officiator would at most record down the most exciting scenes of the battles through a scryer technique and deliver it to some of the major figures of the three realms. On occasion, someone might be lucky and end up becoming an apprentice to one of those True Immortals!

"It would be impressive if even three or four out of these ninety-six became Celestial Immortals. As for Pure Yang True Immortals? If a true expert of the Three Realms really was to emerge from this Conclave, it will probably be this disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu." This was what the Immortal Elder of the Northlands and the others were thinking. This was what even Lu Dongbin believed as well.

For two Pure Yang True Immortals to emerge from a group of ninety-six? That was bit too unrealistic.

"Arise!" The Grand Xia Emperor commanded.

Ning and the other ninety-six all arose, each acting with complete decorum.

The Grand Xia Emperor looked down upon them, then said calmly, "You have all passed the trial of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. You have thus passed the preliminary sorting out process. From today onwards, I will arrange for the ninety-six of you to engage in duels with each other. The losers will be eliminated, while the winners will remain."

"The ninety-six of you will engage in a round of duels. After the first round, forty-eight will remain. All forty-eight of you will each receive an

Immortal-ranked magic item.”

The voice of the Grand Xia Emperor echoed throughout the entire main hall.

Whooosh.

Everyone below was stunned. Even the near-thousand Celestial Immortals were stunned. All forty-eight would receive an Immortal-ranked magic treasure? In the past, only the top three figures in the Conclave would receive such a treasure. This was more than ten times as extravagant as the past; it represented forty-eight Immortal-ranked treasures!

“The forty-eight will go through two rounds of elimination duels, resulting in twelve remaining. These twelve will each receive five million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence!” The Grand Xia Emperor said calmly.

Utter silence.

The Celestial Immortals were all surprised...and Ning and the rest of the ninety-six were all stunned. Their eyes turned red with desire. Even Ning, despite his tremendous wealth, felt a surge of desire. Five million kilograms...even if Ning sold off all of Youngflame Nong’s treasures and everything he had acquired from the Witchriver Immortal Estate, it would still be far less than five million kilograms. Five million kilograms was a sum that would cause even many Celestial Immortals to turn red-eyed with envy. Only the Grand Xia Emperor could afford to be so generous.

“Why is his Imperial Majesty being so generous? Five million kilograms to each person? Twelve people...how many kilograms is that?!”

“His Imperial Majesty has never been so generous when bestowing even the likes of us with gifts.”

The Celestial Immortals were speechless.

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The Grand Xia Emperor, still speaking in a very calm manner,

continued: “The twelve will engage in another series of duels, resulting in six remaining. These six will fight until only three remain! The three final winners...will be permitted to go into the imperial treasure vault of my Grand Xia Dynasty and choose out any divine ability or secret art of their choosing.”

Choosing?!

Ning and the others turned berserk with desire. The accumulated knowledge of an entire major world...it vastly surpassed the Dao Repository of the Black-White College by countless times! The techniques which the local Raindragon Guard branches possessed were already enough to cause Ning to turn red-eyed with desire, to say nothing of the main Raindragon Guard headquarters! And the imperial treasure vault of the Grand Xia Dynasty? It most assuredly had even more than the main Raindragon Guard headquarters!

“How can they be allowed to choose?! Divine abilities and secret arts are the foundation of a powerful tribe.” Even King Qi, King Yan, and the other Kings were completely stunned. “That vault is the foundation of our Xiamang clan. How can they be allowed to choose from it as they see fit?! They will definitely choose the strongest techniques. How can the most powerful divine abilities and secret arts we possess be disseminated to outsiders?!”

However, the leader of the Xiamang clan, the Emperor of the Grand Xia, held unquestioned authority and power.

“In addition...per the orders of my venerable master...!” The Grand Xia Emperor spoke in an extremely solemn voice.

All of the Pure Yang True Immortals next to him, be it Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, Lu Dongbin, or the Immortal Elder of the Northlands, all felt their hearts clench.

“Amongst the final three victors...my venerable master will choose a person to become his own honorary disciple. After said person breaks through to become a Celestial Immortal, said person shall become my venerable master’s personal disciple.” The Grand Xia Emperor’s voice

rang out clearly, echoing throughout the entire main hall. All the Celestial Immortals within the main hall fell completely silent. Even the Pure Yang True Immortals had fallen silent.

The eight Pure Yang True Immortals were all in a state of shock; they had no idea that this was going to happen.

“What boldness and spirit! Daofather Crimsonbright truly is bold and spirited; he’s actually going to accept a disciple from this Conclave!” Lu Dongbin sighed mentally to himself. “Still...it makes sense. Amongst the tens of major worlds under the command of Daofather Crimsonbright, the world of the Grand Xia is number one in terms of luck and karma. The Three Realms are in a state of upheaval and facing turbulent undercurrents. It has only been a few decades since the collapse of the Six Paths of Reincarnation...it is indeed true that one of the future heroes of the Three Realms will emerge in the first Conclave of Immortal Destiny to be held here after the collapse. It is worth him taking on a new disciple.”

“One of them will become the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright?”

Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta and the others all stared at Ning’s group.

“Clearly, Grand Emperor Xuanwu has taken a fancy to that sloppy-looking fatty, and has even taught him his Grand Black Tortoise divine ability. There’s no way Daofather Crimsonbright would disgrace himself by trying to steal him! Then of the other 95...which one shall become the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright?” All of them were now guessing.

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“The disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright?”

The eyes of the near-thousand Celestial Immortals below all turned red.

They were the Celestial Immortals of the world of the Grand Xia; thus, they were all naturally under the command of Daofather Crimsonbright! Daofather Crimsonbright had an exalted status far above theirs; he was a major power of the Three Realms who commanded dozens of major

worlds. The Celestial Immortals under his command were as numerous as the clouds. Almost all of these Celestial Immortals were his honorary disciples...but most of them had never even said a single word to Daofather Crimsonbright!

They dreamed about becoming a personal disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright, but alas, they had no chance. In fact...not a single one of these near-thousand Celestial Immortals was a personal disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright!

“None of us will become a personal disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright, but one of them will actually become the Daofather’s personal disciple.”

“That Sloppy Daoist is the personal disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu...as for the other six, one of them will become the personal disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright.”

“This is really too insane.”

The Celestial Immortals present found it hard to accept this.

A Daofather!

Someone who was capable of controlling a Heavenly Dao. The personal disciples they took on were innately endowed with astonishing potential and comprehension ability; after spending enough effort and paying enough of a price, they would generally all become Celestial Immortals! This was why, even though the likes of Daofather Crimsonbright and Grand Emperor Xuanwu nominally took on weak Wanxiang Disciples as mere ‘honorary disciples’, in the future it was all but guaranteed that they would be upgraded to ‘personal disciples’.

The eight Pure Yang True Immortals were surprised...and the nearly-thousand Celestial Immortals were filled with disbelief and envy. As for Ning and the others, they were completely stunned silly. Most of them didn’t even know who the master of the Emperor of the Grand Xia was! But since the Emperor of the Grand Xia was the emperor of this major world, someone capable of casually tossing out dozens of Immortal-ranked magic treasures...how formidable was his master?!

The Grand Xia Emperor was someone who could speak with the Celestial Emperor of the Celestial Court as equals. Then his master...?

The ninety-six could all guess the answer, and they were naturally both stunned and filled with wild desire.

Was this like manna from the heavens?

“The place where you shall engage in your duels shall be atop the clouds outside the palace.” The Grand Xia Emperor pointed to the distant clouds outside the hall. Whoosh. Instantly, an enormous grand sealing barrier that was ten kilometers in size appeared atop the cloud. “You shall battle there, within the grand sealing formation. When one side dies or admits defeat, then the battle will conclude.”

“The first battle shall be Cangwu Jiu of the Cangwu clan against Dragonmatch of the Myriad Beasts School!” The Grand Xia Emperor continued, “The others can rest off to the side.”

“Ji Ning, little Sloppy, come over here.” Ning immediately heard someone call out. Turning his head, he saw that it was King Yan. Behind King Yan was his cousin, Yuchi Xiyue, along with Yu Wei. Ning immediately went over. As for the Sloppy Daoist, upon seeing this he immediately followed; they were all of the Black-White College, after all.

The others who had Celestial Immortal Patriarchs of their various schools or clans present all went to the sides of those Celestial Immortals. As for those who didn’t have any Celestial Immortals behind them, as long as there was even a hint of a relationship with them, a Celestial Immortal would call them over.

“Zhan, child!” Patriarch Arcanum’s long, slanted eyes were filled with savagery. He sent mentally, “This is a chance that rarely comes once in even ten thousand reincarnations. You absolutely must use all your power to fight into the top three! If you can become the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright, then you shall have done more for our Youngflame clan than anyone else in our entire history. Even the Celestial Immortal Patriarchs of our Youngflame command shall obey your command!”

Youngflame Zhan couldn’t help but send mentally, “Who is Daofather

Crimsonbright?"

"The teacher of his Imperial Majesty!" Patriarch Arcanum explained, "He is one of the true major powers of the Three Realms...someone who can determine whether our Youngflame clan will flourish or decay with but a single word!"

Chapter 20: Daoist Threelives and Daofather Crimsonbright

“If you die here as a result, I guarantee that after reincarnating, you will be reborn into our Youngflame clan once more, and I will take you on as my disciple.” Patriarch Arcanum looked at Youngflame Zhan. “Zhan, child, this is a rare chance. You have to seize it!”

Zhan could sense Patriarch Arcanum’s ardent desire. He understood how important this was.

“If you succeed...then you might become an expert on the level of his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor,” Patriarch Arcanum said eagerly.

Zhan nodded heavily.

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“You have reincarnated nine times for the sake of overcome the Celestial Tribulation and becoming a Celestial Immortal. To become a Celestial Immortal is far, far too difficult...the path in front of you is almost guaranteed to be a dead end. Little girl, if you become Daofather Crimsonbright’s disciple, you need not fear that you will not be able to become a Celestial Immortal!”

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“Jiu, child, you absolutely have the power to make your way into the top three of this Conclave. Although our Cangwu clan has already reached the very pinnacle of power in the Grand Xia Empire, that’s our limit; there’s no way the imperial clan of the Grand Xia will give us any chance to increase in power any further, unless our Cangwu clan also produces a Pure Yang True Immortal. That, however, is too difficult...but you now have that chance! You have to seize this sort of a chance!”

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The various major clans, sects, and schools were all saying these words to the competitors with them.

If previously the Celestial Immortals were quite relaxed, upon learning that Daofather Crimsonbright was going to take on a disciple, all of them were frantic. They even felt hatred...self-hatred for not having personally taught these young geniuses! If they had personally taught them, then the young geniuses on their side would probably be even more powerful.

Unfortunately, they had previously held these so-called geniuses in no regard at all; after all, there were far too many geniuses in the world. It was too late for any regrets.

Ji Ning and Yu Wei were next to each other. They were even holding hands, and the dreamy looks they were giving each other were causing even the nearby Yuchi Xiyue and Sloppy Daoist to get a bit sick of it.

“Junior apprentice-brother, junior apprentice-sister, the two of you...?” The Sloppy Daoist blinked a few times.

“You just found out?” Yuchi Xiyue smirked.

Ji Ning and Yu Wei looked at each other and smiled.

After sharing life and death experiences together during the past year, their hearts had long ago become linked.

“Haha, congratulations and felicitations. The disciples of the Black-White College, in participating in this Conclave, have actually produced a pair of Dao-Companions. This shall be the talk of the world,” the Sloppy Daoist laughed.

“Sloppy Daoist, Ji Ning, don’t be too relaxed,” Yuchi Xiyue quickly warned. “Didn’t you hear? The top three have a chance to become accepted by Daofather Crimsonbright as a disciple. This is a chance to ascend to the heavens at one go! Daofather Crimsonbright is one of the true hegemons of the Three Realms, someone who has mastered a Heavenly Dao.”

“Right! We have to fight for this chance,” the Sloppy Daoist nodded.

Ning nodded as well. At the same time, he mentally asked, “Senior, if I become apprenticed to Daofather Crimsonbright, will he recognize my [Starseizing Hand] and realize the relationship between myself and

Daoist Threelives? Will this be trouble?"

Suddenly, a voice rang out in his mind. "Ji Ning, don't worry; Daofather Crimsonbright was born a True God of Primordial Chaos. Like Master, he was born from the primordial chaos itself. They even adventured and faced life and death together; the relationship between them is quite deep. Although he wasn't one of Master's most intimate of friends, they were still on extremely good terms. Even if he knows of the relationship between you and Master, he won't harm you. Someone like Daofather Crimsonbright would not lower himself by acting against you."

"A True God of Primordial Chaos...and they adventured together?" Ning was puzzled. "Daoist Threelives was one of the major powers of the Three Realms, while Daofather Crimsonbright is one as well. Even they need to adventure together and risk their lives?"

"I don't understand this very clearly either; all I know is that there truly are some extremely terrifying places in the Three Realms. Master and some other True Gods of Primordial Chaos have joined forces in the past to fight in those places. All of them are very close to each other, and some of them are in fact individuals who are willing to sacrifice their lives for Master, and vice versa." The giant yellow bear sent, "Don't worry. The True Gods of Primordial Chaos are quite a unified group."

"In addition, it was Daofather Crimsonbright who developed the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] which you train in." The giant yellow bear sighed, then sent, "After countless years have passed, Daofather Crimsonbright has mastered a Heavenly Dao and become a Daofather. If Master is still alive, he should have perhaps mastered a Heavenly Dao as well."

"Daofather Crimsonbright is very good-natured, and all the other True Gods of Primordial Chaos praise him. If you can become his apprentice, you should be able to learn some information regarding Master from him." The giant yellow bear had always wanted to learn if Daoist Threelives was still alive or not.

"Then I will force my way into the top three, or even become number

one. I will do my best to make Daofather Crimsonbright choose me as his disciple,” Ning sent.

“Right.” The giant yellow bear felt eager as well.

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King Yan suddenly turned to look at the Sloppy Daoist, then asked mentally, “Little Sloppy, you also want to become the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright?”

“I naturally have to at least give it a good shot,” the Sloppy Daoist said, puzzled. “How can I let a chance like this just slip away? If I miss it, I probably won’t have another chance like this for the rest of my life.”

“How did you learn the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability?” King Yan asked.

The sloppy, pudgy youth grinned. He knew that upon revealing it, his secrets would be eventually revealed. After all, the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability was simply too easy to recognize. He laughed then sent mentally, “Your Highness, I acquired this Grand Black Tortoise divine ability by luck. While adventuring, I entered a cavern estate and thus inherited a legacy and was taught this grand divine ability.”

“Oh.” King Yan now understood. Most likely, the Sloppy Daoist had no idea...that his master was Grand Emperor Xuanwu!

In the main hall of the Skylight Palace, the various Celestial Immortals were all chatting and laughing amongst themselves while paying attention to the duels that were going on atop the cloud.

The first round of duels was currently taking place.

In the first battle, Cangwu Jiu battled against Dragonmatch. This was an exceptionally vicious battle, as both were Fiendgod Body Refiners. Dragonmatch was unwilling to admit defeat until almost all of his divine power had been used up. However, his eyes were clearly filled with resentment. As for the Celestial Immortal Patriarchs of the Myriad Beasts School, they couldn’t help but shake their heads with resentment and sigh as they saw this. The chance had come and go, just like that.

In the second battle, Adept Woodpass battled against Kindwater Qi. Kindwater Qi immediately used a forbidden technique at the very start, going all out. However, Adept Woodpass actually showed mercy; at a critical moment in the fight, he merely gave Kindwater Qi a heavy wound, not taking his life. The helpless Kindwater Qi was forced to admit defeat.

One battle after another went on, everyone going all out.

“The allure of becoming a Daofather’s disciple...who can resist it?” Lu Dongbin shook his head and sighed. Raising his head, he took a swig of wine from his cup. “And yet, how many of them understand...that the disciple of a Daofather is still nothing more than a disciple. The master can bring you into the school, but training is a matter of personal cultivation. The major powers of the Three Realms...they all relied on their own abilities for their achievements.”

“Lu Dongbin! You hypocrite, you have two Daofathers standing behind you and even more Daofathers who have provided you guidance, and you’re going to sigh and shake your heads at them?” The Immortal Elder of the Northlands was clearly rather displeased. “This old man can’t stand your words.”

“You’re just jealous.” Lu Dongbin cast the Immortal Elder a sideways glance out of the corner of his eyes.

“Jealous my ass. This old man is also a Pure Yang True Immortal; if you have true ability, then go become a Daofather! By then, I’d definitely admire you; in fact, I’d even go to your door and obediently listen to you expound on the Dao and treat you as I would a teacher,” the Immortal Elder snorted.

“Shameless old fogey. Once I truly do become a Daofather...I might not even be willing to expound on the Dao with you. It’ll depend on my mood.” After saying these words, even Lu Dongbin himself felt that he was boasting too much; after all, it wasn’t so easy for someone to become a Daofather. He didn’t even have mastery over a Heavenly Dao yet! He immediately pointed towards the outside and said, “Look, the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu has entered the arena.”

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In the sixth battle, the Sloppy Daoist fought against Adept Gloomcloud.

Adept Gloomcloud truly was an extraordinary figure; however, there was a quite a bit of difference in power between himself and the Sloppy Daoist. Fortunately, the Sloppy Daoist showed mercy and so Adept Gloomcloud's life was spared. He admitted defeat, then left.

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The Grand Xia Emperor, seated atop his imperial throne, stared downwards at his subjects. He said calmly, "The 41th duel shall be between Ji Ning of the Black-White College and Zhuxiang of the Redlotus Sect."

His voice didn't just reverberate within the main hall; his echoing voice, filled with all of his majesty, reverberated within the imperial citadel plaza as well.

The delegates from the 3600 commanderies and four seas all stared into the skies. In the sky above them was a massive mirror, which reflected the scenes of battle between the geniuses within the grand sealing formation atop the cloud.

"Junior apprentice-brother, you have to be careful." Within the palace, the Sloppy Daoist said with a laugh, "This Zhuxiang is a Fiendgod Body Refiner. All Fiendgod Refiners are tough to deal with. Thankfully, the Adept Gloomcloud I ran into just now was a Ki Refiner, which made it a bit easier."

"Ji Ning, be careful." Yu Wei looked at Ning as well.

"Don't worry. I'm planning to go for number one." Ning immediately turned and walked outside.

Right at this moment, a youth who had been seated in the lotus position behind a distant Celestial Immortal also rose to his feet and began to walk towards the outside. This youth seemed quite wanton and dissolute, and gave the impression of being perpetually sleepy. However, he was the number one Holy Child of an extremely large sect, the Redlotus Sect. His

power was indeed formidable; previously, the outside world had known very little about him, and he had only become famous during this Conclave.

“They are coming out. Coming out!” Mu Northson stared upwards excitedly. “Quick, look, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning is coming out.”

“Brother Ji Ning’s power is formidable; that Zhuxiang of the Redlotus Sect is no match for him at all. Brother Ji Ning is aiming to be number one.” Northmont Baiwei was watching with excitement as well; he naturally was pleased upon seeing his good friend ascend farther and farther along this Immortal path.

“Wonderful. My Black-White College is about to suddenly become famous, utterly famous!” Immortal Fivecraze was in extremely high spirits and excited.

“Master.” Little Qing’s serpentine eyes were flashing with light as well.

The Whitewater Hound’s head was also lifted. As he watched, he felt his chest heave with emotions. “Big brother, if you were still alive...how wonderful it would be for you to be here and watch Ji Ning become such a dazzling figure in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny of the Grand Xia Dynasty.”

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Atop the cloud. Within the grand sealing formation.

Ji Ning and Zhuxiang of the Redlotus Sect were both standing within the grand sealing formation. Zhuxiang was dressed extremely casually. His Daoist robes appeared quite sloppy, and a large portion of his chest was revealed as well. He looked at Ning, appearing to be still half-asleep.

Zhuxiang sighed gently, “I didn’t expect to run into you in the very first duel. I heard that you are one of the participants in this Conclave who is the hardest to deal with. In the Diagram, I travelled alongside my fellow disciples. No one was capable of forcing me to unleash my supreme technique...but I didn’t expect that I would be forced to do so in this very first battle. You should feel lucky to lose to my supreme technique.”

“Zhuxiang.” Ning spoke out. “Do you know...what I view you as?”

“What?” Zhuxiang smiled lazily. “A pile of crap? A mere ant? A mighty dragon? Or...?”

“No, no...in my eyes...you are an Immortal-ranked magic treasure,” Ning chortled.

Chapter 21: The Top Twenty-Four

The Xia Emperor, Lu Dongbin, and the rest of the nine Pure Yang True Immortals were watching the two competitors within the grand sealing formation. Upon hearing their dialogue, all nine of them couldn't help but laugh.

"This Zhuxiang...he is fearless due to his ignorance." Lu Dongbin shook his head and sighed, "Actually, everyone who has been watching this Conclave already has a rough sense of who the most powerful individuals of the ninety-six are. By contrast, the ninety-six themselves actually aren't clear about how powerful many of them are."

Indeed.

Zhuxiang had only been warned by a Celestial Immortal Patriarch of the Redlotus Sect that Ji Ning was one of the most difficult to deal with contestants in this Conclave, and that he had to fight with full power and not be the slightest bit overconfident. But Zhuxiang himself had never fought against Ning; how could he understand how powerful Ning was?

The spectators on the outside had seen all the battles within the Diagram. The Wanxiang Adepts themselves, however, were ignorant despite having been actually within the Diagram itself. Even Ning himself had only fought against ten or so members of the other 95.

"The first round of duels doesn't matter that much." The Xia Emperor nodded. "The purpose of this first round is to separate the most powerful experts; I'm not actually having the most powerful ones fight against each other yet. Ji Ning truly is far more powerful than Zhuxiang."

"Senior apprentice-brother, you had best hurry up and prepare those Immortal-ranked magic treasures. All forty-eight of the winners are going to need one." Sovereign Hao let out a loud laugh. "Right; are the forty-eight Immortal-ranked magic treasures going to be low-grade or middle-grade?"

"Low grade, of course!" The Xia Emperor laughed.

“I knew it!” Sovereign Hao nodded as well.

“You aren’t ashamed to take out low-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures? The Immortal-ranked magic treasures I carry with me and which I hand out on a whim are all at least high-grade!” Lu Dongbin glanced sideways at the Xia Emperor, who instantly felt resigned. “I have many subordinates under my command, and I also need to keep control over an entire major world. It isn’t easy, you know! I can’t just randomly throw out Immortal-ranked magic treasures like you, Lu Dongbin. You are free to do what you please.”

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Ning exploded forth with his full power. His six Immortal swords simultaneously chopped downwards towards Zhuxiang of the Redlotus Sect like a series of catastrophes, giving him no chance to fight back at all.

“I admit defeat,” Zhuxiang called out loudly. He then gave Ning a hard look, as though memorizing Ning’s appearance. This defeat had been simply too disastrous...

“Mm. One Immortal-ranked magic treasure down.” Ning quickly returned to normal, then lazily left the grand sealing formation and returned to King Yan’s side within the palace, moving to stand together with his cousin and Yu Wei.

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Soon, all forty-eight battles came to an end. The battles in this first round were all fairly simple; after all, the Xia Emperor had arranged a strong competitor to fight a weak competitor in each duel, with the goal of selecting out the strongest competitors.

“The forty-eight of you have each won a duel in the first round. Each of you shall receive an Immortal-ranked magic treasure. Now, I shall bestow them unto you.” The Grand Xia Emperor, seated high up above them on his throne, waved his hand. Instantly, magic treasures that emanated massive ripples of power came flying out. There were ropes, flying swords, clocks, millstones, needles, shuttles, spikes, warhammers, grand

sealings, longstaffs, silk ribbons, flywhisks...

The forty-eight Immortal-ranked magic treasures all flew outwards to the forty-eight winners.

It was an Immortal-ranked sword that flew towards Ning. The sword-ki revolving around the Immortal sword transformed into the appearance of an old man that looked towards Ning with curiosity.

“This is...” Ning stretched his hand out, catching the Immortal sword and sending his senses into it briefly.

He was someone who had seen the Azuresilk Godfire Lamp and the Thousandbull Sword, after all; Ning had the feeling that this was comparable to the ripples given off by the Azuresilk Godfire Lamp.

“It should be a low-grade Immortal-ranked item.” Ning mused secretly to himself, “But it is still a flying sword, extremely suited to attacks. The Grand Xia Emperor saw that I am a Sword Immortal and so bestowed an Immortal sword upon me? Mmm...it’s probably worth around 1.75 million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.”

He had expected this Immortal-ranked magic treasure to be low-grade. After all, the top twelve would receive five million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. It was reasonable for the top forty-eight to be bestowed with a low-graded Immortal-ranked magic treasure.

“Thank you, your Imperial Majesty!”

Ning and the rest of the forty-eight all kowtowed as their voices rang out in unison. Some of them had looks of uncontrollable excitement on their faces.

Low-grade Immortal-ranked?

Not all of these Wanxiang Adepts were as lucky as Ji Ning! Many Loose Immortals were not in possession of Immortal-ranked magic treasures; for them to possess one was already quite incredible.

Whoosh. The Xia Emperor smiled and nodded. Instantly, rainbow-colored raindrops appeared above Ning and the others. As they landed

upon the bodies of the Ning and the others, Ning could feel his divine power and elemental ki be quickly restored. Those who were wounded were all quickly healed as well. Although most of them had spirit-pills that could have accomplished this, Ning and the others couldn't help but feel excited that the Xia Emperor had personally healed them.

"Arise. All of you can go back and get some rest. Prepare for the next competition," the Xia Emperor said.

Ning and the others all returned to their respective locations. Ning and the Sloppy Daoist returned to King Yan's side.

Soon, the Xia Emperor ordered for the second round of duels to begin.

"The second round of duels shall begin now," the Xia Emperor said calmly. "In the first battle, Xiangtian Xiao of the Xiangtian clan shall face Kindwater Gan of the Kindwater clan." 1.

Xiangtian Xiao...he was the final remaining competitor of the Xiantian clan within this Conclave. Kindwater Gan, in the same way, was the final disciple the Kindwater clan had within this Conclave.

Both of these ancient clans hoped for their own disciples to win.

However, victory was determined after a few short exchanges in this duel. Xiangtian Xiao, with clear superiority, defeated Kindwater Gan.

"Xiangtian Xiao is quite powerful." The Sloppy Daoist watched the battle outside the palace and spoke out in praise.

"Yes." Ning nodded. "His Dao is the Grand Dao of the Sabre; the Dao of the Sabre is a Grand Dao that is comparable to the Dao of the Sword...and it is even more dominating and overbearing. Xiangtian Xiao himself is quite a heroic and straightforward figure, and his sabre arts are like him...he is indeed a formidable foe."

"He can indeed be described as a formidable foe," the Sloppy Daoist nodded.

"The second battle shall be between the unaffiliated Adept Blackstone and Adept Danzhu of the East Seas," the Xia Emperor proclaimed.

Upon hearing this, Adept Danzhu, as beautiful as a fairy from the Moon Palace, couldn't help but frown. Still, she still walked into the grand sealing formation outside of the main palace. As for Adept Blackstone, he appeared as he always did; barefoot, bald, and pitch-black. He leaned on a gnarled staff as he walked forward with a calm smile.

"The Xia Emperor actually pitted Adept Danzhu against Adept Blackstone? Based on what we saw from the first round...the Xia Emperor generally pits a strong fighter against a weak fighter, so as to ensure that strong fighters won't clash against each other too early on." Ning shook his head. "It seem as though in the Xia Emperor's eyes, Adept Danzhu's power should be in the bottom twenty-four of these forty-eight."

"Right. Although Adept Danzhu is quite famous, she still isn't a Fiendgod Body Refiner," the Sloppy Daoist agreed. "When Ki Refiners fight against Fiendgod Body Refiners, they are generally at a significant disadvantage...especially seeing as how all the competitors in this Conclave are supreme geniuses. The weaknesses of Ki Refiners are made even more apparent."

Ning nodded. It was true. And this was before the tribulation; upon a Fiendgod Body Refiner becoming an Empyrean God, his power would immediately be on the same level as a Pure Yang True Immortal! From this, one could tell how major an advantage Fiendgod Body Refiners towards the late stages!

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The battle between Adept Blackstone and Adept Danzhu was an extremely weird battle.

Adept Blackstone only had to use his Fuxi Staff Formation to cause Adept Danzhu to be completely unable to fight back. In the end, she had to admit defeat. From start to finish, Adept Blackstone hadn't been forced to fight in close combat a single time.

"What a terrifying Adept Blackstone." This caused Xiamang Zishan, Ji Ning, Adept Ninedeaths, Cangwu Jiu, and the other geniuses to all memorize what had just happened.

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One competition after another.

Several figures appeared who caused Ning to be secretly alarmed. There were some whom he wasn't too familiar with, such as the likes of Adept Goldcrow, Adept Primalback, or Adept Unicosmo. Actually, everyone in the top twenty four was quite frighteningly strong.

"The twenty-fourth battle. The unaffiliated Adept Saberslave shall fight against Adept Bloodfiend of the Heaven Piercing clan."

This was the final battle of the second round.

Adept Bloodfiend was a fairly dazzling figure; his berserkness and his bloodlust had caused everyone watching to firmly fix them in their minds.

But...

He was actually defeated miserably!

Just two blows of the saber! The first blow caused Adept Bloodfiend to be knocked flying backwards, but he had enough power to want to come back and try to fight again. The second blow, however...it chopped his body completely in half! The bisected Adept Bloodfiend hurriedly called out loudly, "I admit defeat!"

"What?!"

"How can this be?!"

Ji Ning, the Sloppy Daoist, Xiamang Zishan, Adept Blackstone, Adept Ninedeaths, and the others were all tremendously shocked. A serious look appeared in their eyes.

A formidable foe! Without question, a formidable foe! Nobody dared to say that they were confident in being able to defeat this mysterious 'Adept Saberslave.'

Adept Saberslave was a black-robed man that carried a warcleaver. He was cold-faced and didn't say anything at all. When he stood there silently, he was easily overlooked...but when acting against Adept Bloodfiend, he revealed his fierceness!

“This wandering cultivator...he should be the disciple of a good friend of mine. Previously, he didn’t cause any stir at all, and I thought that he simply had the same Daoist title. But those two saber blows, and his status as a wandering cultivator...there should be no doubt about it.” Lu Dongbin’s eyes lit up, and he laughed as he praised, “This good friend of mine once mentioned this disciple of his; he said that his disciple had taken on the Daoist title ‘Saberslave’ and had sworn that he would offer everything he had to the Dao of the Saber. He was going to infuse everything he had into the Dao of the Saber, and that he was willing to be a slave to the Dao of the Saber!”

“Oh? Intriguing.” Truelord Chiji’s eyes lit up. “Eastflower, who is friend of yours?”

“Umm...nice weather we have today!” Lu Dongbin suddenly turned his head to stare into the void of the skies.

Truelord Chiji was instantly speechless.

The Xia Emperor and the others couldn’t help but smile. Still, they could tell that Lu Dongbin clearly didn’t want to name this friend of his; most likely, this friend of Lu Dongbin most likely belonged to an alliance that was an enemy of one of the Daofathers supporting Lu Dongbin! Lu Dongbin made friends throughout the Three Realms; he even dared to befriend some enemies and some vile demons.

“There are quite a few solitary wandering cultivators this time,” the Xia Emperor said. “This Adept Saberslave is one of them. There are some truly powerful figures amongst this group; some most likely come from other worlds. No matter where they are from, however...since they have participated in this Conclave, I will naturally treat them all equally.”

“However, for this Saberslave to suddenly explode with such power causes me a bit of a headache.” The Xia Emperor shook his head. “Based on my previous understanding of their power levels, in the third round, I had already made plans for who would fight who...but for this Saberslave to explode with such power in the final battle of the second round makes it so that I don’t know what to do.”

“I have a recommendation,” Lu Dongbin suddenly said.

“Oh?” The others all looked over.

“This Saberslave should be the most powerful expert of the Dao of the Saber out of these remaining twenty-four. As for that Dao-companion of the little girl I like, that Ji Ning...he’s the most powerful expert of the Dao of the Sword. One is a Sword Immortal while the other is a Saber Devil; having the two of them fight each other will undoubtedly be quite interesting.” 2

The Xia Emperor, hearing this, let out a laugh. “Each of the twenty-four are formidable. No matter who I put Adept Saberslave against, it will still cause me a headache. Since you’ve spoken out, Lu Dongbin...then let’s have this Ji Ning fight against this Saberslave.”

*

1. Xiangtian Xiao is an interesting name; Xiangtian means ‘facing the heavens’, while Xiao means laugh; his name thus means ‘laughing towards the heavens’.
2. In Chinese, the sword (jian) refers to thin, double-edged longswords that are used for slashing and piercing. The saber (dao) can refer to either daggers (duan dao, short saber), or to (usually) single-edged bladed weapons meant for hacking and chopping, such as backswords/broadswords and cleavers. The sword is viewed as the weapon of the gentleman due to its more graceful stances and elegance, while the saber is viewed as the sword of a brute/warrior due to its violent, hacking blows that are extremely suited for the battlefield.

Chapter 22: Ji Ning and Saberslave

Ji Ning, Yu Wei, the Sloppy Daoist, and Yuchi Xiyue were quietly whispering amongst each other, discussing each of the remaining twenty-four competitors.

“Adept Woodpass always defends passively, reacting to whatever the enemy throws at him...but he ended up winning, just like that.” Yuchi Xiyue sighed. “I have the feeling that he hasn’t shown his full power yet.”

“Adept Ninedeaths, her body is like a magic treasure. Enemies aren’t able to do anything to her at all.”

“Adept Goldcrow is bizarre and savage.”

“That Adept Saberslave is also quite terrifying.”

“Ji Ning, the Xia Emperor isn’t going to arrange for you to fight against the Sloppy Daoist, is he?”

“The Xia Emperor wouldn’t, unless senior apprentice-brother and I both make it into the top three.”

They continued to chat amongst themselves. Not a single remaining expert was easy to fight; after all, all of the twenty four were favored by the Xia Emperor. Although it seemed as though Ji Ning, Adept Ninedeaths, Adept Blackstone, Xiamang Zishan and the others were the most outstanding, the others weren’t much weaker. Perhaps they were hiding supreme techniques, or perhaps they might make a sudden breakthrough.

At a time like this, anything could happen.

“The twenty-four of you!” The Xia Emperor suddenly spoke out.

The entire main hall of the Skylight Palace fell silent. All of them listened carefully. The closer they were to the finale, the more cautious the Celestial Immortals present were; after all, a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu had appeared in this Conclave, and one of the final three would definitely become the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright.

“In the third round of duels, the twelve winners shall each receive five million kilograms as a reward,” the Xia Emperor said calmly. “I hope that you will all use your full power. Don’t let it all be for nothing.”

Ning and the rest of the twenty-four held their breaths as they waited eagerly.

“In the first battle of the third round...Ji Ning of the Black-White College shall fight against the unaffiliated Adept Saberslave,” the Xia Emperor said.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Countless gazes turned towards Ji Ning and Adept Saberslave.

The faces of Yuchi Xiyue Yu Wei both changed. They were both looking towards Ning as well. To both of them, Ji Ning was the most important person in their world. Although they had great faith in him...Adept Saberslave’s earlier performance had been simply too shocking. In addition, they had the feeling that they hadn’t seen the full extent of his power.

Ning and Adept Saberslave both began to walk towards the grand sealing formation outside the palace.

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“It is the two of them?”

The delegates from the 3600 commanderies and four seas who were watching from the imperial citadel plaza were all completely focused. During this past year, they had been relaxing, chatting, eating, and drinking...but these were the final battles between the ninety-six. This was going to be the most dazzling spectacle in this entire Conclave.

This was especially true now that only twenty-four remained! Each of them were incomparably amazing, supreme geniuses. In addition, this Conclave itself was far more dazzling than previous ones; the top twenty-four were each capable of being ranked in the top three of ordinary Conclaves.

The Sloppy Daoist, Saberslave, Adept Goldcrow, Adept Ninedeaths, and most of the others had originally not planned to come. It was only because their subconscious called them to come that so many peerless monsters had gathered in this place!

“This Adept Saberslave, when fighting against Adept Bloodfiend earlier, chopped through him as easily as chopping through vegetables. He’s terrifyingly strong.”

“Ji Ning was also one of the most dazzling figures in the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. He is tremendously strong as well. For these two to fight...it’s truly going to be hard to say who shall win.”

Everyone present couldn’t help but hold their breaths.

As for the disciples and Loose Immortals of the Black-White College, which had skyrocketed in fame during this Conclave, all of them were extremely nervous. This was because the person who was going to enter battle was Ji Ning, of their own school!

“Master.” Little Qing watched without blinking.

“Ji Ning.” Northmont Baiwei looked towards his good friend as well. When he had first met Ning, Ning was nothing more than a youth of Swallow Mountain...but now, he had become the focal point of attention for the entire Grand Xia Dynasty.

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Within the grand sealing formation.

Ji Ning and Saberslave stood there atop the cloud, staring at each other from afar.

Ning carefully inspected Saberslave. The black-robed man who carried a warcleaver appeared to be extremely calm. He was as still as water, and his aura was completely withdrawn; it was indeed easy for others to pay no attention to him.

“For him to be able to remain so calm at a time like this...for his heart

to have reached such a level...when he explodes forth with full power, it will be extremely terrifying. Even I didn't pay any attention to him before he unleashed his full power." Ning was quite cautious.

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Adept Saberslave was inspecting Ji Ning as well. This delicate-looking fur-clad youth before him seemed to be like a young pumpkin from the vast wilderness, quite ordinary-looking without appearing to be the slightest bit threatening. But Adept Saberslave had watched the two previous rounds of duels; he naturally knew how terrifying this seemingly-delicate youth could be when he exploded with power.

And his eyes...they were as deep as a bottomless pool of water, but within them one could faintly make out a spirit that was as sharp and fierce as the blade of a sword!

This was quite a terrifying youth.

Based on the intelligence reports he had seen earlier, this youth had trained for only thirty years or so. He truly was an incredible monster.

"I have to attack with full power," Adept Saberslave mused to himself. He had often fought those at a higher level of power, and had even killed quite a few Primal Daoists. However, he had never encountered such a terrifying foe who was also at the Wanxiang Adept level, just like he was.

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"I have to fight with full power." This was Ning's private conclusion as well.

Bang! Bang!

Their bodies simultaneously flickered as they both transformed, one into a 54-meter tall giant and the other into a 60-meter tall giant. Clearly, Ji Ning had spent comparatively less time training in the [Heavenly Transformations], and so was slightly lacking in this regard.

Next, the two of them simultaneously executed [Three Heads, Six Arms]!

[Heavenly Transformations] and [Three Heads, Six Arms]...these were two extremely widespread divine abilities in the Three Realms, and were viewed as absolutely necessary for all true experts who trained as Fiendgod Body Refiners.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two charged towards each other like a pair of true Fiendgods. Ning wielded six Immortal swords in his hands, while Adept Saberslave wielded six warcleavers.

As they moved next to each other...both of them released their most powerful divine abilities as well! Ning held nothing back, immediately executing his [Starseizing Hand].

Clang! Clang! Clang!

A consecutive, frantic flurry of sounds could be heard as the swords and sabers collided. The sounds were actually incomparably clear as they spread far away.

In total, they exchanged a total of twelve blows. The six Immortal swords and the six warcleavers clashed against each other twice.

Whoosh. Adept Saberslave suddenly retreated at high speed, transforming into a streak of black light. He retreated all the way to the edge of the grand sealing formation. His entire body seemed to be brimming with dim flames, and he stared coldly towards Ning with a dark gaze. His six hands had already split open at the juncture between his thumb and forefinger, and blood was dripping out.

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Adept Saberslave stared at Ning, his pupils contracting. “What a terrifying strength this Ji Ning possesses, and what terrifying sword arts! Sabers are single-edged weapons that are thicker at the back, allowing them chop out with even greater force. In terms of weapons...if two opponents with equal strength fight against each other, the side wielding a saber will have a greater advantage. But I was actually at a disadvantage!”

Practitioners of the Dao of the Sword were referred to as Sword Immortals; they were agile, relaxed, refined, and free-spirited.

Practitioners of the Dao of the Saber were referred to as Saber Devils; they were savage, brutal, vicious, and ferocious.

These were two diametrically opposed styles!

But in a frontal clash...Adept Saberslave had actually been at a disadvantage.

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"I've reached the twelfth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], and my Fiendgod-like body is incomparably mighty. I also have the [Starseizing Hand]; in terms of pure strength, I am definitely number one in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny! My sword arts are comparable to his saber arts; in a frontal clash, how can he compare to me?" Ning felt complete self-confidence.

Although he looked like a delicate youth, his physical strength was definitely number one in this Conclave! His [Starseizing Hand] allowed his hands to explode forth with truly tremendous power; after all, it was ranked as one of the top ten divine abilities to be invented ever since the universe had been created!

Ning refused to believe that in this Conclave, there would appear another divine ability that ranked in the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms. That was simply too unlikely.

"You are the most powerful Wanxiang Adept I have ever met. However... a battle isn't just about fighting head-on against your foes," Adept Saberslave growled.

"In terms of agility, the Dao of the Sword has always been superior to the Dao of the Saber," Ning replied tranquilly.

As soon as Ning's words came out...

Swish!

Adept Saberslave, moving like a ghost, suddenly appeared in front of

Ning. His six arms simultaneously chopped down with his warcleavers, all moving in an extremely strange pattern. It was as though a series of illusions had appeared, each of which was completely silent, either stabbing or hacking towards Ning.

Ning immediately used his own Windwing Evasion, and his six arms also executed his own sword arts. His sword-light was like silk, dancing and fluttering about in the surrounding area with absolute beauty.

It was quite bizarre. There were no sounds of weapons colliding at all.

Their sword-light and saber-light howled past each other repeatedly, seeming to almost clash but then separate before actually doing so.

Adept Saberslave's warcleavers were truly unfathomably strange.

Ning's swords were moved about in a profound, agile manner.

Ning still held the upper hand! After all, in terms of agility, the Dao of the Sword was indeed slightly superior to the Dao of the Saber.

"The saber...is my life!" Suddenly, a hoarse voice rang out.

Adept Saberslave's eyes suddenly brimmed with a fiery light. His six hacking warcleavers suddenly began to move with incomparable speed! One chop after another...they all chopped down towards Ning. The six warcleavers seemed to have transformed into the spokes of a wheel. A limitless amount of saber-light was constantly descending towards Ning, and Adept Saberslave's eyes, glowing with fiery light, appeared to burn with insanity.

In this moment, he had forgotten himself. Only the saber remained!

In this world of the saber...

Fast! Faster! Fastest! One blow after another!

CLANG CLANG CLANG CLANG!!!

Ning fought back against his foe, and their two figures began to appear in multiple places throughout the grand sealing formation. The saber-light flashed at a simply incomparably fast rate; after all, sabers were single-edged weapons that were used to hack and chop. In terms of raw

speed...their attacks had an advantage over the attacks of a sword.

“Break! Break! BREAK!”

Ning, assaulted and pressured by countless saber-assaults that flashed as fast as fire, instantly exploded with power. Previously, he had been planning to use this as a chance to temper himself, but he now had no other choices. His six Immortal swords instantly became unfathomable in their movements; some were invincibly savage and ferocious, some were as nimble and dextrous as an Immortal maiden sewing clothes, while others solely focused on support.

“YOU CANNOT WITHSTAND ME!” Adept Saberslave had gone completely berserk. In the area around him, a fiery dragon suddenly appeared. The fiery dragon wrapped itself around him as it launched sneak attacks against Ning, disturbing Ning’s rhythm.

Around Ning’s own body, an enormous Waterflame Lotus suddenly appeared. The Waterflame Lotus bloomed open, the petals of the lotus swiveling against each other.

Slash! Slash!

Blood flew everywhere as the two battled with utter madness.

Adept Saberslave could only be described in a single word – fast!

Ji Ning, in turn, brought out all of the magnificent splendor of the Dao of the Sword.

CLANG! A warcleaver was suddenly knocked aside...and attached to it was a severed hand.

“I admit defeat.” A hoarse voice rang out.

The two separated with a swoosh.

Adept Saberslave’s entire body was covered in wounds. The wound on his chest was particularly bad; it had torn apart almost his entire chest. His face was covered with many savage wounds, and one of his hands had been severed, causing his warcleaver to fly away.

Ji Ning, by comparison, was a bit better off. He only had a single vicious

wound on his chest, as well as several wounds that were about to completely finish healing.

“You weren’t completely defeated yet.” Ning looked at Adept Saberslave.

“With six sabers, I still lost a hand. With only five sabers...you probably would’ve taken my life.” Adept Saberslave gently shook his head. He picked up his discarded warcleaver, then walked out of the grand sealing formation. Ji Ning walked out as well.

All of the Wanxiang Adepts within the main hall had extremely solemn looks on their faces.

The battle between Ji Ning and Adept Saberslave had been too berserk, too violent. The two had pulled out almost all the stops in their battle, releasing the full power of the Grand Dao of the Sword and the Grand Dao of the Saber, the two Grand Daos that were most suited for attacking. This caused all of the spectators to feel nervousness in their hearts. Many of them would most likely have been defeated had they been the one to encounter Adept Saberslave.

Fortunately, it was Ji Ning, a Sword Immortal, who had been the one to fight. He had managed to suppress this Saber Devil!

And now...Adept Saberslave had admitted defeat, leaving behind the even more terrifying Ji Ning!

Chapter 23: Ji Ning's Divine Ability

“Ji Ning won!”

“Ji Ning of the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery won!”

The imperial citadel plaza was a hubbub of noise. The delegates from the 3600 commanderies and four seas were all excitedly discussing this most recent battle. It had indeed been quite spectacular! This was because the other competitors, such as Xiamang Zishan, Adept Ninedeaths, or the Sloppy Daoist all relied on their hands or on staffs.

When they fought, their techniques might be more exquisite or more violent...but in terms of murderous savagery, they were far from being a match for the Dao of the Sword or the Dao of the Saber. Sword Immortals and Saber Devils were highly suited to combat! Previously, the two had easily defeated their foes, but this time when they collided against each other...they finally, truly revealed the strengths of Sword Immortals and Saber Devils, these two major schools of combat.

The sight of their battled caused hearts to shudder and grow numb.

The sword-light, the saber-light...any casual blow was capable of slaughtering a Primal Daoist!

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Ning walked back into the main hall of the Skylight Palace, moving behind King Yan and seating himself alongside the Sloppy Daoist, Yuchi Xiyue, and Yu Wei once more.

The gazes of many individuals within the main hall all fell upon Ning.

“I absolutely can’t exchange blows head-on against this Ji Ning. I need to use my strengths to seize his weaknesses.”

“Sword Immortals truly are formidable in an all-out fight.”

“I can’t take him head-on.”

The rest of the twenty-four Wanxiang Adept competitors were all pondering. Only when knowing one’s self and one’s enemies could one

win a hundred battles without fail. They all knew that Sword Immortals specialized in attacking, and they naturally knew where their own advantages lay as well...and so the likes of Adept Ninedeaths, Xiamang Zishan, Cangwu Jiu, Youngflame Zhan, and Adept Blackstone were all quietly pondering on their plans.

The nine Pure Yang True Immortals seated on high, by contrast, began to grow puzzled.

"I wasn't able to see it clearly previously," the Immortal Elder of the Northlands said in a suspicious manner, "But during the battle between Ji Ning and Saberslave, everything became apparent. In terms of their levels of comprehension regarding the sword and the saber, the two were on par...but when they fought head-on, Ji Ning actually held the upper hand. This Saberslave is the disciple of a good friend of Eastflower; his divine abilities shouldn't be weak. So...this Ji Ning should train in an even more powerful divine ability! Or perhaps the power of the swords he wields is greater!"

Truelord Chiji nodded as well. "Ji Ning has only trained for around thirty or so years, but has already reached such a level; he should have had a tremendous stroke of luck that allowed him to learn a powerful divine ability. However, this divine ability is a support-type divine ability that is quite low-key, making it extremely hard to detect from the surface."

"He should indeed have a formidable divine ability." Lu Dongbing laughed loudly. "But each of those who have managed to survive this Conclave thus far are the darlings of this entire major world of the Grand Xia; I'm sure that all of them have had tremendous strokes of luck. Since the universe was established, countless divine abilities have been invented. Some are for attack, others are for suppressing and sealing, others are for poison, while some are for raw strength...they are all different. Ji Ning should have trained in one meant for raw strength."

"Right.

"His speed isn't exceptionally impressive."

They all nodded.

There were, after all, far too many variables that could affect a person's combat power. Some were exceptionally talented; even if they were also just at the twelfth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], their talent made it so that they were a bit stronger! Not everyone at the same level would necessarily have the exact same level of strength! Even those who trained in the same Ki Refining technique, such as the [Flowing Watersource], would need different levels of liquefied elemental essence for a breakthrough. After all, each of them were born with unique bodies that had their differences; the only thing that could be said was that the difference between them wouldn't be too ridiculous.

Different weapons, different insights into different Daos, particularly special divine abilities, or secret arts that allowed elemental ki to explode in certain ways...

These could all cause differences in one's level of power.

Previously, they hadn't even been able to tell that Ning possessed a powerful divine ability, but in Ning's battle against Saberslave, the two had simply been too similar! One was of the Dao of the Sword, the other was of the Dao of the Saber. Putting them side by side made the differences very easily detected, which was why the Pure Yang True Immortals were able to ascertain that Ning should be in possession of a powerful divine ability.

But that was nothing special.

There were plenty of formidable divine abilities; the imperial treasury of the Grand Xia Emperor even held the [Torch Dragon's Eye], one of the top hundred grand divine abilities of the Three Realms. However, the treasury only held the first part of the [Torch Dragon's Eye]; it was only suitable for Void-level Fiendgods to train in. They didn't have the higher-level training techniques.

In truth, a grand divine ability like this, ranked in the top hundred in the entire Three Realms, shouldn't actually have been transmitted to outsiders, even if it was just the first part. The reason the imperial

treasury of the Grand Xia had it was because...the creator of the [Torch Dragon's Eye], the major power of the Three Realms known as the Torch Dragon, had died long ago during the era of the Primordial World!

"Ji Ning might have learned a unique divine ability developed by some Empyrean God or major power," the Pure Yang True Immortals believed.

The divine abilities developed by major powers weren't necessarily the most supreme abilities.

For example, Grand Emperor Xuanwu; only his 'Grand Black Tortoise' divine ability was exceptionally famous. He would occasionally develop some other unique divine abilities as well. Some were suited for fleeing, others were suited for defense, while still others were suited for attacking...these types divine abilities, which he would create in a fairly casual manner, were comparatively speaking of much lower value. Only supreme abilities which the creator poured all of their blood and sweat into would become truly precious.

For example, the 'Grand Black Tortoise' divine ability of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

Or for example, the [Starseizing Hand] of Daoist Threelives.

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"In the second duel, the unaffiliated Adept Ninedeaths will battle against Adept Rainflower of the Soaring Immortal School."

This was a battle between two women.

Adept Ninedeaths had a body like a magic treasure; Adept Rainflower was completely unable to do anything to her. After all, her attacks weren't as powerful as that of a Sword Immortal like Ji Ning!

In this battle...Adept Ninedeaths was the victor!

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"The third duel..."

"The fourth duel..."

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One duel after another. The people watching from the imperial citadel plaza below were all breathless. The Celestial Immortals and Pure Yang True Immortals seated within the main hall of the Skylight Palace were all watching attentively as well. The only reason why the Pure Yang True Immortals were paying so much attention was because Daofather Crimsonbright would choose one of them as a disciple.

“The eighth duel shall wee Youngflame Zhan fight against Xiangtian Xiao.”

This was a battle that many people cared about.

This was because, amongst the twenty-four competitors, only four came from the major clans of the Grand Xia Dynasty – Xiamang Zishan of the imperial Xiamang clan, Cangwu Jiu of the Cangwu clan, Youngflame Zhan of the Youngflame clan, and Xiangtian Xiao of the Xiangtian clan. Just four of them! This proved that in terms of searching for geniuses, the number of geniuses within the various clans was vastly inferior to the number of geniuses spread out within the entire world.

In this battle, Xiangtian Xiao was quite berserk. He completely displayed the legendary valor and savagery of the Xiangtian clan, famous for being willing to challenge the heavens themselves. However...he still lost. His power was indeed quite a bit lower than Youngflame Zhan's. 1

In addition, Youngflame Zhan had been entrusted with the hopes of his clan; he had also gone all out.

The victor of the eighth battle was Youngflame Zhan!

“Good, good, good. Very good!” Watching the battle, Patriarch Arcanum couldn't help but laugh so hard his mouth was about to split apart. Everyone knew how crazed and cold-blooded he was; it was rare to see him smile a single time in ten thousand years. But right now, he was laughing! And in truth, the other Celestial Immortals all understood how Patriarch Arcanum was feeling.

“Zhan, child, well done. Charge forward in just this manner. You've

already made it to the top twelve.” Patriarch Arcanum watched as Youngflame Zhan walked to his side, then immediately encouraged him, “You are very, very, very close to being in the top three now.”

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Finally, the twelve competitions in the third round came to an end.

This resulted in the final twelve being determined!

Ning and the rest of the twelve all stood in a neat line in the main hall, awaiting the Grand Xia Emperor’s bestowal of five million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.

“Xiamang Zishan. Cangwu Jiu. Ji Ning. Sloppy Daoist. Youngflame Zhan. Adept Woodpass. Adept Blackstone. Adept Ninedeaths. Adept Whitedragon. Adept Unicosmo. Adept Primalback. Adept Goldcrow.” The Xia Emperor stood at the front of the hall, listing out the names of all twelve before continuing. “The twelve of you have ranked in the top twelve in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. I said previously that those who made it into the top twelve would each receive five million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.”

The Xia Emperor waved his hand. Instantly, twelve violet-jade bottles appeared out of nowhere in the air before them. One of the twelve violet-jade bottles flew to each of the twelve victors.

This caused even the Celestial Immortals present to stare towards the bottles. Five million kilograms! This caused even them to feel envy and desire. These twelve little fellows ended up acquiring so much!

Ning and the others reached out to grab them. They then swept the bottles with their divine senses!

“Wow.” Ning secretly sighed in amazement. “This violet bottle is a wonderful treasure for storing liquefied elemental essence as well. It is actually able to hold five million kilograms of it. It’s comparable to a high-grade Heaven-ranked flying sword in value.”

“With these five million kilograms, my Primaltwin should be able to charge all the way to the peak of the Void-stage,” Ning mused to himself.

“But there’s no need to rush it; my Primaltwin has spent very little time at the Primal level. I should keep it there for a period of time longer and understand it better.”

At every single level, there were different insights to be gained. Reincarnated Immortals might have already trained at a certain level, so it didn’t matter, but Ji Ning was no reincarnated Immortal. It was best for him to spend a bit of extra time at each level. But of course, after his true body broke through to become a Primal, his Primaltwin could make the breakthrough to the Void-level.

“You shall first enter the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers,” the Xia Emperor suddenly said. “I will change the flow of time in the place where you reside. I shall wait for you for two hours in the outside world; within the Diagram, you will have three days to quietly train.”

Ning and the others were flabbergasted. Train for three days within the Diagram?

“Strange. Previously, when the hundred thousand-plus competitors entered the world of the Diagram, wasn’t the flow of time inside it the same as the flow of time outside it? Why is it that all of a sudden, three days in the diagram becomes equal to two hours outside of it?” Ning was puzzled.

“Ji Ning!” The giant yellow bear’s voice rang out in Ning’s mind. “It seems as though the emperor of your Grand Xia Dynasty has quite a bit of insight into the Grand Dao of Time. However, changing the flow of time will use a tremendous amount of energy; although the Grand Xia Emperor is a Pure Yang True Immortal, he still wouldn’t dare to try and change the flow of time for more than a hundred thousand people. The twelve of you represent a much lower burden to him.”

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Swoosh swoosh swoosh!!!

Ning and the rest of the twelve were teleported straight into the world of the Diagram, and then the scroll of the Diagram itself flew into the

Grand Xia Emperor's hands.

"Xiamang, you want to let them train for three days?" Truelord Chiji laughed. "It seems you truly do place tremendous importance on this Conclave."

"It's not that I place importance on it; it's that I must not only be hard-working in service to Master, I also must put thought into it," the Xia Emperor said. "There are only twelve who remain in this Conclave. The previous battles they engaged in have caused their hearts to be tempered through the invisible pressure their competitors placed upon them...and they are currently in the process of evolving. I am giving them three days. Perhaps, this will be enough to let them make a breakthrough. I naturally wish to ensure that only the three best geniuses are presented to Master for the choosing."

"Right. When you are working for your master, you need to not only be hard-working, but also put thought into it." Lu Dongbin nodded and smiled. "No wonder Daofather Crimsonbright likes you so much, Xiamang."

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Ji Ning and the others appeared atop a mountain peak. The mountain peak was more than a three hundred meters in size; naturally, it was enough for twelve cultivators to train in. In addition, there were invisible barriers surrounding the mountain peak; there was no way for Ning or the others to walk out from the area of the peak.

Ning and the others immediately sat down into the lotus position, not even saying anything to each other.

They all felt as though their souls had been filled with new insights; perhaps this might be their chance to apply them and make a breakthrough. A little bit of a breakthrough might make a tremendous difference in whether or not they would be able to be selected into the top three! That meant a chance to become the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright! Who wouldn't go all out for that chance?

Ning, too, had the ardent desire to become Daofather Crimsonbright's

disciple!

*

1. Remember, Xiangtian means 'facing the heavens'.

Chapter 24: The Sloppy Daoist Against Adept Ninedeaths

While Ji Ning and the rest of the twelve were in secluded meditation and training within the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. The imperial citadel's plaza.

Twelve names repeatedly came up in conversations: Xiamang Zishan, Cangwu Jiu, Ji Ning, Sloppy Daoist, Youngflame Zhan, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone, Adept Ninedeaths, Adept Whitedragon, Adept Unicosmo, Adept Primalback, Adept Goldcrow.

“The top twelve have been determined.”

“Our South Seas have Adept Woodpass.”

“Our North Seas have Adept Goldcrow!”

“Our Quchang Commandery has Adept Whitedragon.”

“You guys are nothing. Our Stillwater Commandery has two people; Ji Ning and the Sloppy Daoist!”

Only twelve finalists had emerged from the 3600 commanderies. Two of them belonged to Stillwater Commandery, and both were from the Black-White College!

Immortal Fivecraze was grinning so broadly his jaw was almost crooked. Clutching a calabash of wine, he gulped it down happily, occasionally chatting through divine sense.

“Oh, you are the leader of the Myriad Beasts School? Haha, yup, I’m Fivecraze. Yup, Ji Ning and little Sloppy both belong to our Black-White College. To be honest, Yu Wei of our Black-White College was poisoned; otherwise, she would’ve made it into the top ninety six as well. She might have even entered the top twelve! What? You would like to get to know the disciples of our Black-White College? You want to go spend some time viewing the Black-White Diagram within the Black-White College? Sure, no problem! How about letting the disciples of our Black-White

College also go take a look at the ten thousand beasts of your school?"

"Xiangtian clan? Your Xiangtian clan wishes to send its disciples to the Black-White College? But, but...the Black-White College is in Stillwater Commandery, after all. We have very little room, and it's not convenient for us to have too many disciples! That's why we are extremely strict whenever we take on new students. What's that? Your Xiangtian clan wishes to send an envoy delegation to the Black-White College? No problem. Our Black-White College will definitely take good care of them."

Many people had come to seek out Immortal Fivecraze.

It must be understood that the Xiangtian clan and the Myriad Beasts School were some of the most supremely powerful schools in the entire Grand Xia Dynasty. They had all learned from their Celestial Immortal Patriarchs that the Sloppy Daoist was the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu. Given how outstanding Ji Ning was as well...all of the major powers were puzzled.

"For a small school to suddenly produce one outstanding genius is one thing; that can just be attributed to luck. But they actually produced two! The entire Grand Xia Dynasty has only twelve on their level...and one of them is the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu. I imagine that this Black-White College must be one of the places within our Grand Xia Dynasty where luck is gathering and flourishing."

"It must be a place of tremendously positive karmic luck."

Many major powers came to this conclusion.

Luck; it couldn't be seen, nor could it be touched. But some places were just naturally lucky! When the imperial capital of the Grand Xia had been built, the Grand Xia Emperor had invited a major power to personally choose a site with great karmic luck to build on, then set up a grand formation that guarded the entire world from the site.

"We have to send our disciples over there. When they train in a place of such karmic luck, they too will be blessed by luck."

“Right. We also need to go spend some time observing the Black-White Diagram of this Black-White College.”

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace. An hour had passed.

The Grand Xia Emperor sat above all others atop his throne. With a wave of his arm, a furled scroll appeared in his palm. It was the Pure Yang treasure, the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. The scroll opened, and twelve streaks of light flew out and landed on the ground. It was Ji Ning, the Sloppy Daoist, and the rest of the twelve.

“We prostrate ourselves before you, your Imperial Majesty,” Ning and the others said as they all fell to their knees.

“Mm.”

The Grand Xia Emperor glanced at them, then nodded in satisfaction. He could vaguely sense that after three days of quiet training, all twelve of these had made some improvements. Some of them had improved considerably.

“This is now the most important part of this Conclave. Three of you shall emerge from the twelve...and one of the three shall definitely be chosen by my master as a disciple,” the Xia Emperor said. “There is no time to waste. Let the first battle in the fourth round of duels begin. Let us have the Sloppy Daoist of the Black-White College fight against the unaffiliated Adept Ninedeaths. The others can all rest, watch, and prepare for their own duels.”

Ning, Xiamang Zishan, and the others were all surprised.

The Sloppy Daoist against Adept Ninedeaths?

Adept Ninedeaths was extremely strong, and she had yet to unleash all of her full power. As for the Sloppy Daoist, the Celestial Immortals had all gushed over him endlessly. Xiamang Zishan and the others had all heard their respective Celestial Immortal Patriarchs praise the Sloppy Daoist and warn them to be wary of him. It was as though the Sloppy Daoist was the strongest amongst them.

Due to the warnings of their Celestial Immortal Patriarchs, all of them were paying very close attention to the Sloppy Daoist.

Sloppy against Ninedeaths? So soon?

As for the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths, they each gave the other a glance, then walked out from the main hall and towards the grand sealing formation.

.....

The nine Pure Yang True Immortals seated at the front of the main hall of the Skylight Palace began to argue amongst each other.

“Xiamang, is something wrong with your head?” Truelord Chiji said with a frown, “This is just the fourth round, meant to determine the top six; why are you pitting the Sloppy Daoist against Adept Ninedeaths? Adept Ninedeaths has mastered five complete Dao-Paths long ago, and her divine abilities and training techniques are all incredibly powerful. Her might is significant! She should rank amongst the very top, and definitely has a chance to become number one. The Sloppy Daoist is the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu; he should rank at the top as well, and also has a chance to become number one. For you to have them fight now...that means one of them will have to be discarded prematurely.”

“It is indeed too early. It isn’t appropriate to have the two of them compete so soon.” Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta slowly spoke out as well.

“Do all of you think that I can’t tell that Adept Ninedeaths is powerful?” The Xia Emperor shook his head.

“Xiamang has his own difficulties.” Lu Dongbin shook his head. “Actually, by now, I have a favorable impression of eight...but six must be eliminated! Thus, no matter how you match them up, at least two of the eight I like will be eliminated.”

The Xia Emperor nodded. “Right. By now, of these twelve, I have a particularly favorable impression of Xiamang Zishan of my own clan, Ji Ning, Adept Goldcrow, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone, the Sloppy

Daoist, and Adept Ninedeaths! No matter how I match them up, two of these seven will have to end up fighting each other. I pondered for a long time about what to do. The Sloppy Daoist is already the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu; Master definitely won't try to steal someone else's disciple. As for Adept Ninedeaths, she's the only female amongst the seven. They stood out. So, I ended up deciding to stop worrying about it and just have the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths fight. Whoever wins will stay behind."

"That's quite decisive of you."

"The reason you are having Adept Ninedeaths fight the Sloppy Daoist is actually because she's female?" The other Pure Yang True Immortals couldn't help but laugh.

.....

Ning, Yu Wei, and Yuchi Xiyue were all behind King Yan. They were staring at the distant grand sealing formation outside the hall. Within the formation, there were two individuals; a sloppy, chubby youth and a similarly dirty maiden.

"Both of them are incomparably slovenly. They are a good match," Yuchi Xiyue whispered.

"But both are very powerful," Yu Wei praised.

"They are indeed. When Adept Ninedeaths puts on those silver gloves, even I can't tell how great her power is. Although I fought against her previously, she hadn't used that magic treasure at all." Ning watched carefully. "Eldest apprentice-brother's power is unfathomable as well. It's hard to say who will win."

They were all staring at this battle. The Pure Yang True Immortals were paying absolute attention as well.

The Sloppy Daoist? A disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

Adept Ninedeaths? Everyone had noticed long ago that she was one of the two masters of five Dao-Paths, and she had a body like a magic treasure.

“They are starting.” Yuchi Xiyue stared intently.

Ning’s eyes instantly narrowed. “They are finally showing their powers. Adept Ninedeaths...she truly is frightening.” Till now, Adept Ninedeaths had never before revealed her full power. When she had fought Ning, she had mainly focused on tying him down. But this time, in her duel against the Sloppy Daoist, she actively launched a sudden, violent attack.

Gloves on hands, Adept Ninedeaths six arms had become six incomparably fierce weapons!

Attack!

Sometimes, her hands hacked down like blades with invincible sharpness.

At other times, they glided like water, swirling about in a soft, circular manner.

Adept Ninedeaths circled around the Sloppy Daoist, attacking wildly. The two of them both used their divine abilities, both having transformed into three-headed, six-armed giants.

“Which Grand Dao is this?” Ning frowned. The attacks of Adept Ninedeaths were extremely strange. They created an extremely uncomfortable stifling feeling, while her own attacks were constantly fluctuating in style in an unfathomable manner. “It shouldn’t be an especially well-known one. I, at least, have never seen this Grand Dao.”

.....

“The Grand Dao of Mortality! This little girl truly is quite ambitious. The Grand Dao of Mortality...it is one of the most supreme of the many Grand Daos. It is extremely hard to train in. She actually dares to tread on this Grand Dao?” Lu Dongbin shook his head with a sigh. “But if she reaches a certain level in this Grand Dao, then overcoming the Celestial Tribulation will become significantly easier by comparison.”

The Grand Daos of Taiji, the Sword, and the Saber were all technique-focused Daos!

By contrast, the Grand Dao of Mortality contained the infinite mysteries of life and death within it, as well as the technical principles regarding how life and death interchanged.

It was a Grand Dao that not only contained many profound mysteries, but also ways to apply techniques! It was extremely difficult to train in, even more so than the Daos of the Sword or the Saber.

“Interesting.”

“This little lass truly is formidable.”

.....

Adept Ninedeaths attacked wildly, occasionally becoming as savage and vicious as a God of Death, while at other times seeming to be as gentle and soft as the caress of a mother. The interchange and the linkages between life and death...they caused even the Sloppy Daoist to be suppressed for a period of time.

However...

The Sloppy Daoist was truly too stable and unshakeable. When executing the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he also executed his Grand Dao of Taiji.

The Sloppy Daoist seemed to have transformed into a whirling and spinning turtle-shell. His defense was absolutely impregnable. The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability was exceptionally suited for defense, and the Grand Dao of Taiji was also extremely suited for defense.

“Damn.” Adept Ninedeaths let out a furious growl as she grew even more berserk.

By contrast, the Sloppy Daoist was incomparably relaxed and leisurely. His six arms seemed to have transformed into the spokes of an enormous windmill, blocking one attack after another.

HISS!

A sound like the hissing of a serpent.

The Sloppy Daoist had been defending this entire time, his guard as

tight as a turtle shell, allowing the opponent no flaws to slip attacks through. All of a sudden, his arm came slamming out! His hand struck out in a serpentine stance, viciously stabbing forth! As it did, it just so happened to strike at a flaw in the stances of the frantically attacking Adept Ninedeaths, tearing her arm apart at the shoulder and sending it flying off.

Slash...

After his first attack, the Sloppy Daoist suddenly exploded with power. He charged forth with the power of a formerly dormant volcano that was suddenly exploding, and his six arms had all transformed into vipers that moved with strange savagery.

His defense had been completely impregnable. His attacks...they were as terrifying as the strikes of a viper.

“Perfect. I was afraid you’d keep hiding!” Adept Ninedeaths wasn’t startled; in fact, she was delighted. If her opponent had continued to defend, he might have been able to exhaust her divine power. That would be an unfair way to lose! Adept Ninedeaths immediately moved forward to exchange blows, and her severed arm was quickly regrowing.

Both of them truly did have the power to contend for the number one position!

*

1. Literally, life/death.

Chapter 25: Secret Art ‘Wavefolding’

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Sloppy Daoist's six arms were currently striking out like six venomous serpents, moving with unstoppable ferocity and extreme viciousness! His savage attacks seemed as torrential as a storm of rain, and each strike was potentially lethal. Clearly, he wanted to seize this chance to break down Adept Ninedeaths; after all, she had lost an arm and now had only five remaining.

“Hahaha...hahaha...” Adept Ninedeaths actually let out a delighted laugh. Each of her palm blows seemed to contain the power of life and death within them, causing everyone who looked at her to feel a stifled feeling. She madly blocked all of the Sloppy Daoist's attacks, and she even used her own body to block some strikes to win a little bit of time.

The Sloppy Daoist was ferociously attacking, while Adept Ninedeaths was striving to hold on until her severed arm had regrown.

“Not good!”

Ji Ning, Yu Wei, and Yuchi Xiyue all felt nervous as they saw this. Even though Adept Ninedeaths only had five arms, the Sloppy Daoist remained unable to shatter through her defenses. She was currently planning to hold on until her sixth arm grew back...at which point, it would be even harder for the Sloppy Daoist to defeat her.

“Is this all he has...this disciple which Grand Emperor Xuanwu took such a fancy to?”

He can't even defeat an unaffiliated cultivator like Adept Ninedeaths?” The True Immortals at the front of the Skylight Palace were all quite puzzled. As they saw it, given Grand Emperor Xuanwu's status, his disciple should naturally be extraordinary. Otherwise, that would be an utter loss of face for Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

Lu Dongbin, by contrast, was staring far into the distance. Smiling, he said, “This battle is interesting. This Adept Ninedeaths has an extremely

deep level of insight into the Grand Dao of Mortality; in fact, I even suspect that she has memories from several previous lives...she is definitely extremely strong. Can it be that the Sloppy Daoist is actually going to lose to her?"

"It wouldn't be strange if he did," Truelord Chiji agreed.

"Just because someone is going to become a Celestial Immortal in the future doesn't mean they cannot lose a battle in the present." Sovereign Hao shook his head.

All of the Pure Yang True Immortals felt that the outcome of this battle was now in doubt.

Based on their judgment, both the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths had used all of the powers available to them. The Sloppy Daoist had an impregnable defense, and his attacks were absolutely savage as well...and yet, he remained unable to do anything to his opponent. This was indeed quite dangerous for him.

.....

The Sloppy Daoist suddenly took a break from his frantic attacks, beginning to launch a different tempo of strikes.

"This is...?!" Adept Ninedeaths face suddenly changed. The Sloppy Daoist was currently very calm; his six arms moved in unfathomable ways, and at almost all times four of them were defending while two of them were attacking! They felt like the waves of the sea. Each successive wave was increasingly powerful, and the same was true for the Sloppy Daoist's attacks. When defending, he was accumulating power...and when attacking, he would let it erupt forth!

Accumulating power, then unleashing it!

This sort of strange tempo caused the Sloppy Daoist's attacks to slowly become increasingly ferocious. One wave after another continued to merge into each other, causing Adept Ninedeaths to feel increasingly stifled.

"What what what...what is this?!" Adept Ninedeaths couldn't

understand it at all. The waves were growing increasingly savage in power!

BOOM!

The Sloppy Daoist suddenly struck out with all six arms. They all struck out as fists with a power that felt faintly similar to an enormous black tortoise slamming against the pillars of heaven. Boom....Adept Ninedeath blocked the blows, but was knocked flying backwards. Her body had split open at many places from the force of the collision, and blood was flowing from the wounds nonstop.

Whoosh. The Sloppy Daoist took a single step, appearing before Adept Ninedeaths. His six fists once more moved to strike out.

“I admit defeat.” Adept Ninedeaths discontented voice rang out. She was now using all her efforts to dodge. Only now did the Sloppy Daoist come to a halt. The turtle-shell runes covering his body disappeared as well as he returned to normal.

The dirty face of Adept Ninedeaths was filled with resentment and an unwillingness to accept this. She looked towards the Sloppy Daoist: “Sloppy Daoist; your level of comprehension of the Dao is limited, and whether I am attacking or defending, I can handle you. So why is it that this last technique of yours became increasingly hard for me to withstand...until in the end, I had to admit defeat?”

The Sloppy Daoist just laughed. This was a battle technique he had developed after gaining insight into the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability. When he had been transmitted this Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he had sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens that without permission, he absolutely wouldn’t teach anyone any part of it at all. This technique involved some of the profound mysteries of the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability; naturally, he couldn’t teach it to anyone else.

“What is the name of this sort of battle technique?” Adept Ninedeaths quickly asked.

“Wavefolding!” The Sloppy Daoist responded to her.

“Wavefolding...one wave after another, folding onto each other...I was trapped within the waves, and death was the only way out...I clearly wasn’t weaker than you, but I was still defeated...wavefolding...wavefolding...” Adept Ninedeaths walked away, murmuring the word ‘wavefolding’ to herself. She even had a sudden feeling...that if she could comprehend the mysteries of this ‘wavefolding’, then she would have a chance to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal!

This was a stroke of luck for her! But if she was unable to comprehend it, then in this life, her ninth life, she would probably once more fail the tribulation!

.....

Within the Skylight Palace’s main hall. The nearly thousand-strong Celestial Immortal Patriarchs were all frowning. Although they were very experienced, even they couldn’t understand what had just happened. Clearly, these two were both on par with each other in terms of divine abilities, comprehension of the Dao, and Fiendgod Body Refining techniques. In fact, Adept Ninedeaths was even at a slight advantage. So why, in the end, had she been defeated like this?

It had seemed as though Adept Ninedeaths had walked into an endless tide; no matter how much she struggled, it was useless. In the end, the tide had completely drowned her.

“What was that?”

“How could that have happened?”

“I don’t understand.”

The Celestial Immortals all felt that there were strange mysteries to what had just happened. It should have been some sort of battle art they just saw, but none of them could comprehend it.

“He truly lives up to being the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.” This was the only thing they could come up with.

.....

“Wavefolding!” The Xia Emperor and the rest of the nine Pure Yang True Immortals all revealed a look of surprise and amazement.

“I sigh in amazement. I sigh in amazement!” The Immortal Elder of the Northlands shook his head and sighed with emotion, “This Sloppy Daoist truly has astonishing comprehension abilities. He was even able to comprehend some of the true exquisiteness of this secret art of Grand Emperor Xuanwu’s...when I watched that battle just now, I was even reminded of that scene from back when I was listening to Grand Emperor Xuanwu expound on the Dao.”

“Truly incredible!” Lu Dongbin sighed in disbelief as well.

“Formidable.” The Xia Emperor seemed to show a hint of envy.

“Grand Emperor Xuanwu...he truly is a major power!” Truelord Chiji’s eyes were filled with admiration.

At their level, they actually all understood the profound principles behind the Sloppy Daoist’s ‘wavefolding’ technique. This was a technique that constantly circulated and accumulated waves of power; the longer the power was stored up for, the more terrifying the final explosion of power would be! But even if one was taught this technique and completely understood its principles, that didn’t mean one would necessarily be able to use it. This was a matter of heart, a matter of comprehension.

They all understood some of the profound underlying principles, but as the saying goes, some things are ‘easy to understand, but hard to do’! Understanding was one part; actually executing the technique was something else entirely.

“We can comprehend the mysteries of this Sloppy Daoist’s ‘wavefolding’ technique, but when the Grand Emperor personally executes it, the profound mysteries are countless times more complicated,” Lu Dongbin sighed. “Grand Emperor Xuanwu’s ‘Grand Black Tortoise’ divine ability... its true exquisiteness lies in a single word; the so-called ‘folding’.”

.....

Ning was frowning as he watched. He could vaguely sense that the final battle technique the Sloppy Daoist had used had seemed to contain an utterly heaven-shaking profound mystery. He could even sense that the Grand Dao of Taiji was mixed into it. But Ning himself did not walk upon the Grand Dao of Taiji; he couldn't understand what he had seen at all.

"Yu Wei, what do you think?" Ning looked towards the nearby Yu Wei; she herself was walked upon the Grand Dao of Taiji.

"I don't understand it. It is very profound, unfathomably so. I can vaguely sense the exquisite essence of the Grand Dao of Taiji, but that's just one part of this secret art. I imagine that eldest apprentice-brother has only mastered the tiniest portion of this secret art." Yu Wei completely couldn't understand the technique either; she couldn't get the slightest bit of insight into it.

.....

The Celestial Immortals were puzzled, while Ning and the others were completely baffled. Just like that...this battle ended.

One of the top six had been determined...the Sloppy Daoist!

Rumble...

Suddenly, a ripple of the Dao descended within the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

"Eh?"

Everyone's gazes turned in unison to stare at the point where the Dao-ripple had descended. They saw Cangwu Jiu, seated in the lotus position behind a Celestial Immortal Patriarch of the Cangwu clan. In the area around him, a hint of a black wind could vaguely be seen.

"He comprehended a Dao?"

"He comprehended yet another complete Dao-Path?"

"He actually comprehended a complete Dao-Path by watching that battle?"

Everyone present was completely astonished. Generally speaking, it was

fairly common for someone to suddenly make a breakthrough during the course of a battle, but Cangwu Jiu had just been watching the battle. In that tense atmosphere, he had actually gained sudden mastery over a complete Dao-Path?

Ning, Xiamang Zishan, Youngflame Zhan, Adept Blackstone, Adept Woodpass, Adept Whitedragon, Adept Goldcrow, and the rest of the twelve Wanxiang Adepts all sensed a new threat.

Cangwu Jiu had been very powerful to begin with. And now, he had mastered yet another complete Dao-Path....and in doing so had immediately become a truly formidable foe!

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“But, but...” The Grand Xia Emperor, seated atop his throne above the others, shook his head and laughed bitterly. He looked towards the other eight Pure Yang True Immortals. “Everyone, how do you think I should arrange these next battles? With this breakthrough, he has now mastered five complete Dao-Paths. In addition, this breakthrough was in one of the Daos of the Wind, one of the Five Elements. He was already exceptionally fast; he now will be even more formidable.”

He had already come up with a plan for matching up duelists. But Cangwu Jiu’s sudden mastery of a new Dao-Path, combined with the fact that he was already very formidable...this made him an even more shocking competitor.

“I view Cangwu Jiu quite positively,” Lu Dongbin said with a laugh. “He was actually able to make a breakthrough just by watching a battle...I imagine that his level of luck must be quite high as well. He was already quite formidable, and had never exploded forth with his full power; now that he has made another breakthrough, I imagine that his power is most likely not inferior to even the likes of Adept Ninedeaths.”

“This is going to be trouble.” The Grand Xia Emperor was pondering. He immediately made some slight mental adjustments to the pairings he had come up with earlier. He had originally ranked Cangwu Jiu as number eight or nine amongst the twelve, but now he ranked him somewhere

around the third or fourth.

.....

A sudden breakthrough in the main hall of the Skylight Palace...this naturally attracted quite a bit of attention. The Celestial Immortal Patriarch of the Cangwu Clan had extremely long eyebrows, and he was currently extremely excited. He stared at Cangwu Jiu, this disciple of his clan. Upon seeing him open his eyes, the Celestial Immortal immediately said, "Good, good, good. Jiu, child, this is an excellent breakthrough. For you to make a sudden breakthrough here in the Skylight Palace must be the arrangement of the heavens; this time, you'll definitely make the top three."

The Celestial Immortal Patriarch was almost able to visualize how glorious the Cangwu clan would be in the future.

Why did the Cangwu clan necessarily have to submit to the Xiamang clan? With Daofather Crimsonbright supporting them, in the future the Cangwu clan would be able to grow and develop to the point where they would be able to sit down with the Xiamang clan as equals.

"The second duel in the fourth round shall see Adept Whitedragon of the Divine Dragon Mountain against Cangwu Jiu of the Cangwu clan." The Xia Emperor's voice suddenly echoed in the main hall of the Skylight Palace as well as the vast imperial citadel plaza below.

Chapter 26: Ji Ning Battles Youngflame Zhan

Cangwu Jiu against Adept Whitedragon!

Every person who had battled through the Conclave of Immortal Destiny to this point was a peerless genius. As if by unspoken agreement, they had all but given up using divine will attacks or spell-based attacks against each other! This was because using magic treasures and elemental ki was not enough to threaten their foes; they all had to rely on divine abilities to battle. Ji Ning had given up the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] as well!

BOOM! WHOOSH!

Cangwu Jiu and Adept Whitedragon were battling savagely against each other. Both of them used [Heavenly Transformation] and [Three Heads, Six Arms], then each unleashed their respective divine abilities.

Adept Whitedragon had completely transformed into a snowy white divine dragon, while Cangwu Jiu had exploded forth with a level of speed that was utterly amazing. The only thing that could be seen was a howling wind which flashed with streaks of lightning. Within the berserk lightning, the vague form of Cangwu Jiu could be barely made out. He flashed forward repeatedly at an utterly astonishing speed...it was as though a group of Cangwu Jius were fighting against this single snowy white divine dragon!

“What terrifying speed.”

“What shocking agility.”

Everyone was secretly amazed.

Ning, Xiamang Zishan, the Sloppy Daoist, and the others all felt their hearts sink. In terms of speed, Cangwu Jiu had always been ranked number one in this Conclave! Now, with this additional new breakthrough, his speed and agility had reached an unfathomable new level.

In close combat, speed and agility were even more important than strength!

“What a terrifying Cangwu Jiu.”

“A single overwhelming advantage can be used to great effect everywhere. Just by relying on his absolute advantage in speed and agility, he is an extremely terrifying foe.”

.....

There was no question about it. In this battle between two powerful Fiendgod Body Refiners, Cangwu Jiu could attack when he wished and could retreat when he wished; he completely controlled the tempo of battle! Although Adept Whitedragon was powerful, in the face of Cangwu Jiu’s agility and speed, he had no tactical options available at all. In the end...he was defeated.

The second of the sixth finalists in this Conclave had been chosen... Cangwu Jiu!

“Good, good, good!” The long-browed Celestial Immortal Patriarch of the Cangwu clan grew even more excited, and his eyes gleamed with light. He was a Celestial Immortal; naturally, he could tell that although by this point there shouldn’t be any tremendous differences in power amongst the finalists, Cangwu Jiu was able to make his enemies helpless against him, thanks to his tremendous advantage in speed. If this continued...he would definitely be in the top three as well.

The Grand Xia Emperor spoke out once more. “The third duel in the fourth battle...Ji Ning of the Black-White College shall battle Youngflame Zhan of the Youngflame clan!”

His voice echoed forth everywhere.

Ning was seated by King Yan. His pupils contracted. Youngflame Zhan? The Youngflame clan? It was well-publicized that he had a major feud against the Youngflame clan...and his opponent would actually be Youngflame Zhan?

“Ji Ning.” Yu Wei held Ning’s hand in her own as she looked at him. “Be

careful.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

By now, none of the remaining opponents could be underestimated.

On the other side.

Patriarch Arcanum’s face had changed slightly as well. Ji Ning? He had long ago desired to find a chance to get rid of Ji Ning, but compared to the chance of having a clansman becoming the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright, getting rid of Ji Ning was much less important. He had put that in the back of his mind, and his entire focus was on Youngflame Zhan making the top three.

“Zhan, child.” Patriarch Arcanum looked at Youngflame Zhan, who was by his side. He instructed mentally, “This Ji Ning is a Sword Immortal; he’s most skilled in attacking and battling. There is no need for you to fight him head on...and your talents don’t lie in fighting head on either. Use your strengths to strike as his weaknesses. You absolutely can win.”

Youngflame Zhan nodded gently as well. This battle...it was more important than life or death!

Whoosh. Youngflame Zhan immediately walked over towards the outside of the main hall.

.....

“Xiamang, when you instructed Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan fight... why is it that I felt as though the atmosphere within the Skylight Palace became a bit strange? Those Celestial Immortals seem to be looking at Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan in a rather queer manner,” Lu Dongbin said, puzzled.

The other Pure Yang True Immortals had noticed this as well.

The Xia Emperor laughed loudly, “Everyone, you don’t know this, but there is a feud between Ji Ning and the Youngflame clan. To be honest, it’s actually become a bit of a legend.”

“Legend?” Lu Dongbin and the others all began to listen carefully.

All of these True Immortals had arrived after this Conclave had already begun; they didn't have much of an understanding regarding these Wanxiang-level geniuses of the Grand Xia Dynasty. Naturally, they didn't know of the matters between Ning and the Youngflame clan. The only reason the Grand Xia Emperor himself knew about it was because he had collected intelligence reports on all of the geniuses, which was why he learned of it.

"The Youngflame clan had a member known as Youngflame Nong, who was going to be their next clan leader..."

"....."

"...and in the end, that Deathsworn which the Youngflame clan sent out ended up being killed by this Ji Ning's Primaltwin," the Xia Emperor said with a loud laugh. "So...you now understand the feud between Ji Ning and the Youngflame clan, yes?"

The other Pure Yang True Immortals now all understood.

"Xiamang, that's a nasty little trick. You know that there is a feud between them, and yet you intentionally set them up against each other. Still...given that such a feud exists, they are definitely going to fight even more insanely against each other."

"Mm. This battle is definitely going to be quite exciting."

.....

Two of the six finalists had already been determined. Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan; only one of them could enter the final six! So long as they could enter the final six...they would be very close to becoming the three victors. Just one step away!

"The disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright should be me." Youngflame Zhan's gaze was cold. He was a very low-key person; in the younger generation of the Youngflame clan, the most famous person had been Youngflame Nong. He, Youngflame Zhan, had kept his head down and focused on quietly training; his goal had always been to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become an immortal, free, unconstrained

Celestial Immortal!

He had never held that playboy, Youngflame Nong, in any regard at all. Youngflame Nong merely relied on the affection of the Patriarch; he would only be able to dominate for a period of time.

“To become a disciple of a Daofather...this is indeed a chance that rarely comes even after a thousand reincarnations. I have to seize it.” Youngflame Zhan walked into the grand sealing formation, then stared at the distant Ji Ning.

.....

“The Three Realms are unfathomably mysterious. After I become Daofather Crimsonbright’s disciple and have the guidance of a Daofather, I shall be able to advance along my path in a faster, more stable manner!” Ji Ning knew very well that personal hard work and comprehension abilities were only part of it; luck and fate were another part. For example, if he hadn’t had the [Nuwa Painting] visualization technique as he had worked hard under the tutelage of his father, Ji Yichuan...although he still might have been able to surpass his father and become a major figure of Stillwater Commandery after a few centuries, it was thanks to the [Nuwa Painting] that his rise to prominence had become more than ten times faster!

In fact, were it not for the [Nuwa Painting]...he probably would’ve died when he had entered the underwater estate. Strictly speaking, without the [Nuwa Painting], Ning’s talent might not have been high enough for the underwater estate to even teleport him inside.

An initial advantage snowballs into continuous advantages!

To walk farther, to make it to a higher position, to become a major power of the Three Realms...one had to seize every single opportunity possible!

“I am definitely going to enter the top three, and perhaps even become number one!” Ning looked towards Youngflame Zhan. “This Youngflame Zhan...he’s a stumbling block, a tiger blocking a critical juncture in my path of Immortal cultivation. I must annihilate him.”

Their gazes collided from far away.

Even their gazes seemed to be striking at each other. Everyone could sense the resolute aura emanating from the two. Either I can live, or he can...we cannot coexist!

Boom! Boom! Their bodies moved at the same instant as both transformed into three-headed, six-armed giants!

Ning's six arms were holding six Immortal swords, while Youngflame Zhan's six arms were holding onto six long black whips.

"Ji Ning, although your swordplay is indeed formidable, I perfectly counter you. You will definitely lose." Youngflame Zhan's voice echoed forth from his chest as his six arms struck out. The six long black whips began to dance, each one contorting and twisting in the air like an enormous, coiling black serpent. The whips were tipped with a series of sharp spikes, and were also covered with runes. A powerful aura sprang out from each of them.

"Youngflame Zhan, once you get into close combat with me, you will definitely lose." Ning's voice was also incomparably valorous and echoing.

Although both their words held some degrees of truth, they were actually trying to cause their opponent's Dao-hearts to become unstable.

At their level, if their Dao-hearts became the slightest bit unstable, then the amount of power they could unleash would be slightly lessened. If a strike at a critical moment was slightly weaker...one might be defeated.

Ning was pondering to himself. "Youngflame Zhan is an expert in using whips. Once one whip entangles me, the other whips will come to surround me as well. By then, I will be in serious trouble, and might even lose! Thus, I absolutely cannot give him that chance. That means I can't be too straightforward and rely on brute force...in this battle, I need to focus on agility."

Against different opponents, different battle tactics were needed.

Suddenly...

The two of them, who had been speaking and sensing each others auras, suddenly began to charge forward. The battle had instantly begun!

Swish! Swish!

A Waterflame Lotus bloomed around Ning. He stood at the pistil within the center of the lotus, within the leaves. This Waterflame Lotus was capable of affecting the opponent's whips...although the amount of influence was minuscule, it was enough to be of tremendous help in this fight.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

Three long black whips simultaneously lashed out, unleashing crackling sounds of thunder as they did. They were like three black Flood Dragons, containing an incomparably dominating power! As for the other three long black whips, they silently struck out like deadly vipers towards Ning as well.

Ning brandished his Immortal swords while doing his best to close the gap with his foe. The closer they were to each other, the greater his advantage was! Whips...they needed sufficient space to unleash their power. The closer they were in distance, the less of a threat a whip would be.

Crackle...

Sword-light like silk. Silken rays of sword-light flew about in midair, constantly colliding against the whips.

The flying, dancing silken rays of sword-light carried an incomparable resilience. They came out in an interconnected, unending cycle.

"What tremendous strength." From this first exchange, Youngflame Zhan immediately sensed how terrifying Ning was. Although Ning had not chosen to fight him head-on, and had instead chosen to rely on a sword technique that was like water, repeatedly carrying away the strikes of the long whip...each time the sword-light and a whip collided, a terrifying tremor of power would be unleashed!

Youngflame Zhan even felt as though his six arms were beginning to slightly grow numb! Each time he lashed out with his whip, they were knocked to the side.

After using the [Starseizing Hand], Ning truly did have an absolute advantage in terms of power against him.

.....

Immortal Fivecraze of the Black-White College, Uncle White, Little Qing, Yu Wei, Yuchi Xiyue, and the others were all watching nervously.

Patriarch Arcanum was incomparably nervous as well.

Both Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan seemed to be quite cautious in their clashes. They were both familiarizing themselves with their opponent's techniques, giving their foe no chances at all.

"Kill him, kill him!" Patriarch Arcanum's narrow eyes flashed with cold light as he quietly chanted these words to himself.

Suddenly...

Within the grand sealing formation, Youngflame Zhan's six arms suddenly, simultaneously changed. His arms actually became covered with many black scales, as though he himself had transformed into serpent as well. His arms instantly became soft and boneless. His whip strikes, which had previously been savage and vicious...immediately became softer and more insidious as they frantically moved forward to encircle and bind Ning.

Chapter 27: The Six Finalists

“Youngflame Zhan has lost for sure.” Upon seeing Youngflame Zhan execute this divinen ability, and upon seeing how the whip grew even more insidious and soft in its movements, the Xia Emperor couldn’t help but shake his head and say these words.

“Indeed. Youngflame Zhan lost his composure. He actually made a mistake like this!” Lu Dongbin shook his head disdainfully. “Ji Ning has been extremely cautious and hasn’t used any power attacks...thus, Youngflame Zhan’s whips seemingly held the upper hand for a while. In reality, however, Ji Ning’s attacks are the most powerful amongst the top twelve! Just because he didn’t reveal his fangs doesn’t mean that he isn’t powerful; rather, he was just being cautious against whip-type weapons. Who would’ve thought that Youngflame Zhan, frantic to achieve victory, would have immediately used this divine ability as soon as he held the upper hand. He wants to use the whips to try and entangle and bind Ji Ning...but in reality, he’s doomed himself!”

Pure Yang True Immortals had exceptional judgment. They saw right away, as soon as Youngflame Zhan executed this unnamed divine technique, that the divine technique was meant to make one’s arms soft and boneless, so as to allow the movements of the whips to become even more insidious and softer as well. However, this caused the strength of the attacks to actually drop.

In this battle between Ning and Youngflame Zhan, Youngflame Zhan was already at an absolute disadvantage in terms of strength! And now, he was being so hotheaded as to execute this divine technique and further lower his own strength...wasn’t this the same as dooming himself?!

.....

Ning had started off quite cautious, and his six Immortal swords flowed like water in an airtight defense. Youngflame Zhan, upon seeing this, had immediately used a divine ability to make his arms soft and boneless, making his whip movements even more softer and insidious as well. He

thought to himself, “Although my strength will lessen slightly, the movements of my whips will become even more unfathomable and insidious. So long as I can tie him down, I’ll definitely win.”

Youngflame Zhan had gone completely berserk; in the face of this opportunity to become the disciple of a Daofather, even someone as cold and calm as him had grown hotheaded.

“Eh?” Ning was surprised and speechless. “I haven’t even started fighting at full power; I’ve just been carefully guarding. I wasn’t trying to seize an advantage, just working to ensure I didn’t suffer a loss. This would allow me to get a clear look at the secrets of his whip techniques. Why has this Youngflame Zhan suddenly lowered his own strength?” Upon discovering the changes in Youngflame Zhan’s whips, Ning felt surprised and perplexed. “He’s dooming himself!”

Ning trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]!

His divine ability was the [Starseizing Hand]!

In terms of raw strength, he had an absolute advantage! He was just being very careful and cautious, but his opponent actually lowered his own strength in a frantic rush towards victory...

“He’s delivering a present to my door.” Ji Ning suddenly exploded with power.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Six brilliant streaks of sword-light flashed through the air, each one incredibly dominating and savage! The power of the [Starseizing Hand] and his Fiendgod-like body simultaneously exploded forth!

BOOM!

A black whip was blasted away as soon as Ning’s sword-light brushed past it. The difference in power between the two was simply too great, causing the whips to be blasted away. Although Youngflame Zhan managed to keep his grip on it, the skin between his thumb and forefinger had split apart and blood was leaking out.

The six streaks of sword-light, carrying extraordinary savagery and ruthlessness, swept, chopped, and slammed against the whips, blasting all of them apart.

Whoosh. Ning instantly charged right next to Youngflame Zhan.

Youngflame Zhan was tremendously shocked. His face instantly turned ashen as he realized that he had acted too impetuously and rashly. He had completely underestimated Ji Ning. Previously, he had watched Ji Ning's other battles, but only now did he realize how savage and powerful Ji Ning's attacks actually were. At the very beginning, when his hands were turning slightly numb from the colliding blows, Ning had actually been fighting very carefully and conservatively; he hadn't exploded forth with full power at all.

He now knew how utterly terrifying Ning was when fighting him head-on. Unfortunately, it was too late. Ning had already reached him.

"I admit defeat!" Youngflame Zhan's face was ashen as he called out these words loudly. His six arms brandished his whips as well as he frantically tried to create a wall of whips in front of him.

Whoosh! Slash! Ning's six rays of sword-light streaked out before Youngflame Zhan's voice actually rang out. As soon as he spoke out, Ning immediately came to a halt. This was in accordance with the rules of the duel. Anyone who dared violate them would be killed by the Grand Xia Emperor.

Even though Ning had halted, Youngflame Zhan's body had already been chopped into several sections. His body quickly began to pull together and reconnect.

"I lost." Youngflame Zhan rose to his feet, a look of self-mocking in his eyes. "I, Youngflame Zhan, have always felt myself to be an extremely cold and calm person. I didn't imagine...that this time, I was defeated because I wasn't calm enough. The allure of becoming a disciple of a Daofather combined with your ability, Ji Ning...they put me under too much pressure. I wanted to win too badly."

Ning also felt that this battle had been too easily won.

In his previous battle against Saberslave, he had to go all out in order to win. This battle against Youngflame Zhan, however, he had won easily. He had actually been fighting very carefully and conservatively, for fear of the unpredictable movements of the whip.

In truth, amongst the top twelve, all of the Pure Yang Immortals including the Xia Emperor and Lu Dongbin felt the most favor towards the Sloppy Daoist, Ji Ning, Xiamang Zishan, Adept Blackstone, Adept Woodpass, Cangwu Jiu, and Adept Goldcrow. As for Youngflame Zhan... they actually didn't hold in much favor. Still, any of the top twelve, no matter how weak, shouldn't have been defeated so calamitously.

If he hadn't been in a rush to win, and had instead moved to make the blows of his whips more powerful, so as to counter his disadvantage in strength...Ning probably would've had to first understand and familiarize himself against the whip technique.

"Useless thing!" Patriarch Arcanum gave Youngflame Zhan a glance, his gaze filled with nothing but ice. "You knew that his attacks were powerful, but still lowered your own strength...you are utterly useless."

Youngflame Zhan sat down in the lotus position silently.

Patriarch Arcanum felt like his belly was filled with fire...but he had forgotten that all the things he had told Youngflame Zhan earlier had actually also contributed to Youngflame Zhan being insufficiently calm.

"Calm...even in the face of a tremendous stroke of fortune, one still must be calm."

"This was a tremendous fall for me. Patriarch Arcanum even cursed me as 'useless'. I imagine that upon my return to the clan, the other high-level clan members will also be filled with endless rage." Youngflame Zhan came to a decision. "Since I would have to endure the mockery and insults of others within the clan...after this Conclave concludes, I shall leave the clan and go adventuring."

He had always been an extremely calm person. This rare case of hotheadedness had caused him to lose his chance. This was a tremendous loss to him.

But one learns wisdom from each setback. He became even calmer as he coolly reflected on the path he should take in the future.

.....

The Xia Emperor had originally viewed seven favorably. He had been forced to decide on having the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths fight, but then Cangwu Jiu had unexpectedly made a breakthrough. The number of people the Xia Emperor viewed favorably had suddenly risen to eight as a result.

Of the eight, the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths had already fought. But what should his next arrangements be?

.....

In the fourth duel, Adept Woodpass battled Adept Primalback! Adept Woodpass was like a human-shaped tree; he was too sturdy and resilient, seemingly even tougher to deal with than the Sloppy Daoist. He, too, was a terrifying foe that was extremely, extremely good on defense. He forced Adept Primalback to use up all of his divine power...and in the end, forced him to admit defeat.

.....

In the fifth duel, Adept Blackstone battled Adept Unicosmo! The bald, bare-footed youth, Adept Blackstone, was indeed extremely powerful. He executed the Fuxi Staff Formation, then relied on it to launch sudden attacks and then vanish. Adept Unicosmo was thoroughly abused until he was finally forced to admit defeat.

.....

In the sixth duel, Xiamang Zishan battled Adept Goldcrow!

.....

The most vicious, bloody battle was the sixth duel; that between Xiamang Zishan and Adept Goldcrow! Both of them were viewed favorably by the Pure Yang True Immortals. Per the Xia Emperor's original plans, Xiamang Zishan was going to fight Adept Whitedragon,

while Adept Goldcrow was going to fight Cangwu Jiu. But Cangwu Jiu's sudden breakthrough had transformed him into an extremely formidable figure.

There was nothing for it. The second duel had become Cangwu Jiu against Adept Whitedragon. The sixth one had thus become Xiamang Zishan against Adept Goldcrow.

"That Adept Goldcrow is truly formidable; he will be a test for Zishan. If he cannot even defeat Adept Goldcrow, how can he possibly become Master's disciple?" The Xia Emperor was quite harsh in dealing with the disciples of his clan.

And thus, this battle was an exceptionally violent one!

Xiamang Zishan was even more powerful than he had been when battling Ji Ning; his staff techniques were now even more overbearing and dominating than before. As for Adept Goldcrow, his speed and agility were second only to Cangwu Jiu, while his attacks were even more savage vicious and savage.

The two battled until their blood flowed like rivers. It was an incomparably savage sight. In the end, because Adept Goldcrow had been badly injured and had used up almost all of his divine power, he had been forced to admit defeat!

In this battle...Xiamang Zishan had won!

.....

And so, the six finalists of this Conclave of Immortal Destiny had finally emerged from the crucible.

They were the Sloppy Daoist, Cangwu Jiu, Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone, and Xiamang Zishan!

"Two of the top six are actually of the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery."

"But but but...what sort of a place is this Black-White College? Two of these six peerless monsters are actually from them?"

“I hear that the Black-White College is merely a school within Stillwater City that takes up a very small amount of land. They have a total of just a few hundred disciples.”

“What?! They only have a few hundred?! Our school has nearly a million, and is one of the most supreme, large schools of the entire Grand Xia Dynasty, but we didn’t even make it into the top ninety-six. But they actually have two in the top six?!”

Of the top six finalists, two came from major clans; Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu. Two were unaffiliated wanderers; Adept Blackstone and Adept Woodpass. Two came from a school...and they both actually came from the same school, the Black-White College; Ji Ning and the Sloppy Daoist.

“Ahaha, ahahaha...” Immortal Fivecraze was laughing so hard his jaw was turning crooked. He was utterly beside himself with delight. “Haha, I didn’t expect that an old alcoholic like myself would actually be showered with such glory before dying. Even if I die right now, it would be worth it. Ji Ning, little Sloppy, well done, well done, ahahaha! If that little girl Yu Wei had also entered the top six, things would be even better!”

“Patriarch, you want senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei to make the top six as well? This...is a bit too ambitious, isn’t it?” Upon hearing this, the nearby Mu Northson’s eyes couldn’t help but twitch.

“You think this is ambitious? Nope...in fact, I’m still hoping for little Sloppy and Ji Ning to both make it into the top three. That would be even better. Ahahaha! Two of the top three finalists of this entire Conclave of the Grand Xia Dynasty both belonging to the Black-White College...I’d wake myself up laughing whenever I fell asleep. When I die and go to the Netherworld Kingdom, I’d be able to brag a bit with the Judges of the Dead.” Immortal Fivecraze was indeed absolutely overjoyed.

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The imperial citadel plaza was incomparably lively right now, but the atmosphere in the main hall of the Skylight Palace was rather stifled.

This was because the top six had been determined! Next would come

the top three! One of the top three would definitely become the disciple of a Daofather.

“Top three...” Xiamang Zishan’s gaze was crackling with hidden thunder.

“Top three...” Cangwu Jiu was seated, head lowered. He murmured these words to himself.

Ji Ning, the Sloppy Daoist, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone...they were all silent.

In fact, they weren’t even talking to the people nearby them. An invisible pressure had completely surrounded the six of them. With one more fight, it would be determined whether or not they would make it into the top three.

Six people. Three duels. Three eliminations. Three victors!

Who would be eliminated? Who would remain?

Chapter 28: The Sloppy Daoist Battles Adept Woodpass

The Xia Emperor sat above all others atop his throne. Staring downwards, he said calmly, “This is the most crucial point of this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. Xiamang Zishan. Cangwu Jiu. Ji Ning. Sloppy Daoist. Adept Woodpass. Adept Blackstone.”

Ning and the other six all looked towards the Xia Emperor.

“This next round will determine which three of you six will have the chance to be chosen by Master as a disciple.” The Xia Emperor’s voice was calm, but his gaze swept past Ning and the other of the six. He knew very well that if the Grand Xia Dynasty’s world was to produce a peerless hero in this upcoming period of upheaval for the Three Realms, it would most likely be one of the six! In addition, it was guaranteed that one would be taken on by Daofather Crimsonbright as a disciple, while a second one was already a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

“First, spend two hours calming your minds. After two hours, the final, crucial battles shall begin,” the Xia Emperor said calmly.

Ning and the rest of the six were instantly stunned. Calming their minds for two hours? The pressure of making it into the top three had already made it hard for them to even breath. They were all prepared to start beginning their one-on-one duels...but who would have imagined that the Xia Emperor would instruct them to spend two hours calming their minds.

“After two hours, the duels shall begin. These duels shall be the fulcrum on which your destinies shall turn,” the Xia Emperor said calmly, then fell silent.

.....

“Xiamang, you are quite the tormenter,” Lu Dongbin said with a smirk. “As the saying goes, death isn’t frightening; the terror you feel right before dying is what is frightening. If they were to compete right away,

that'd be one thing, but you insisted on delaying for two hours...during these two hours, the invisible pressure they are feeling will most likely torment all of them."

"How can a chance to become a Daofather's disciple be so easily given?" The Xia Emperor said calmly, "The nine of us all encountered countless life-and-death tribulations before making it to our present levels. They, however, are merely Wanxiang Adepts. They must be tempered a bit, and the invisible pressure created by this chance of becoming a Daofather's disciple is an excellent form of tempering."

"Everyone, which one amongst the six do you think the Daofather will choose?" The Immortal Elder of the Northlands said.

"The Sloppy Daoist won't have any problems entering the top six, but he is already the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu. There's no way the Daofather will choose him. Mm...it might be Xiamang Zishan. Xiamang Zishan's dominating aura is bone-deep, and he is most likely being assisted by the karmic luck that surrounds the Xiamang clan. As long as he can become the Daofather's disciple, his future potential will be limitless."

"I favor that bald, barefoot youth. I keep on feeling as though I can sense the shadow of the Shennong clan on him." 1

The human race was the most powerful of the countless races of the Three Realms. In the Primordial World which Pangu had established after creating the universe, after Maiden Nuwa created humanity, the human race began to flourish nonstop. They learned, they grew powerful, and they began to embark upon the Immortal path...and so even as far back as the era of the Primordial World, mankind had already given birth to countless supreme powers.

The Emperor of Mankind, the Divine Farmer Shennong, was one of them.

"Mahāsthāmaprāpta, is something wrong with your head? That bald, barefoot lad uses the Fuxi Staff Formation; if anything, he arguably has a connection to the Fuxi clan."

“I favor Ji Ning. This Ji Ning has trained for just thirty years, but he’s already such a monster; his talent is limitless. Perhaps the Daofather shall choose Ji Ning.”

“I think Adept Woodpass is not bad.”

“I favor Cangwu Jiu.”

The Xia Emperor and the rest of the nine Pure Yang True Immortals each had their own favorites amongst the top six, aside from the Sloppy Daoist.

Ji Ning, Yu Wei, Yuchi Xiyue, and the Sloppy Daoist were currently seated together. Yu Wei and Yuchi Xiyue looked at each other, not daring to say a word. As for Ning and the Sloppy Daoist, they were silent as they meditated calmly.

“Yu Wei, the two of them are...” Yuchi Xiyue sent a worried mental message.

“Don’t worry about them. Although both their Dao-hearts are formidable, the allure of becoming a Daofather’s disciple is simply far, far too great. In addition, this is the final, critical battle. It’s good for them to sit quietly for a time and temper their Dao-hearts,” Yu Wei said. Her training experience was, comparatively speaking, much greater; after all, she had her memories from her past life.

Although Ning also had memories from his past life, not only was his past life a short one, he had also been an ordinary mortal.

Time flowed on. In the blink of an eye, two hours passed.

“The fourth round. The most important round.” The Xia Emperor’s voice suddenly rang out.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Ji Ning, the Sloppy Daoist, Xiamang Zishan, Adept Blackstone, Cangwu Jiu, and Adept Woodpass; their gazes turned scorchingly hot as they simultaneously turned to look towards the Xia Emperor.

“After careful consideration, the six of you shall fight these three

battles."

"In the first battle, the Sloppy Daoist shall fight Adept Woodpass."

"In the second battle, Adept Blackstone shall fight Cangwu Jiu."

"In the third battle, Ji Ning shall fight Xiamang Zishan."

His voice was deep and resonating. It echoed throughout the hall.

Ning and the rest of the six instantly turned their gazes towards their respective opponents.

The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass both appeared to be simple, honest, good-natured individuals...and yet these two good-natured individuals had both battled their way into the top six. Only one of the two could enter the top three. Their gazes turned towards each other...but both were very calm. However, behind the calmness, an unshakable resolve could be seen.

Adept Blackstone and Cangwu Jiu were both unconventional. The bald Adept Blackstone always walked around barefoot, leaning on his staff. Cangwu Jiu, in turn, always appeared to be like a hawk, his gaze predatory and devouring. The two gave each other a glance, and their eyes both seemed to spark with fire.

Ji Ning and Xiamang Zishan were the two most ferocious individuals of the six. Xiamang Zishan's domineering, tyrannical temperament was bone-deep, and his staff techniques were similarly overbearing. Ji Ning, in turn, was the number one Sword Immortal of this Conclave; although he looked like a handsome, delicate youth, in terms of strength, he was the strongest of them all.

.....

Good-natured against good-natured.

Unconventional against unconventional.

Savage against savage.

"The first battle. Sloppy Daoist, Adept Woodpass, the two of you can go to the grand sealing formation. You can begin now," the Xia Emperor

instructed.

“Yes.” The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass both responded with respect, them immediately both moved towards the outside of the hall.

“Xiamang, your arrangements truly are like pitting the point of the nail against the tip of the needle.” Lu Dongbin shook his head. “Not even I would dare guess as to which of them shall become the top three. I can’t tell, I truly can’t tell.”

“It’s precisely because we can’t tell that makes this intriguing.” Although the Xia Emperor was chatting with Lu Dongbin, his gaze was focused on the grand sealing formation outside the palace. He had to pay extremely close attention to each of these three battles...after all, watching with his own eyes was completely different from watching using a water scryinig technique.

Water scrying techniques only transmitted images. Watching with his own eyes, however, allowed him to sense the ripples of the Dao.

“Ji Ning, which of the two will win?” Yuchi Xiyue was extremely nervous.

“I don’t know.” Ning shook his head, then gave a sideways glance towards the nearby Xiamang Zishan.

Xiamang Zishan seemed to feel his gaze, as he turned to look back at Ning as well. Their gazes met...and then both turned away to look towards the battle outside that had just begun.

The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass; one of them would make it into the top three.

Who would it be?

.....

Within the grand sealing formation.

The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass were staring at each other from far away.

“You are the most powerful foe I have encountered so far in this

Conclave.” Adept Woodpass normally looked quite amiable, but right now his eyes were as sharp as knives. He said seriously, “I watched you defeat Adept Ninedeaths, but...you will be defeated by me.”

“Oh. Just saying the words is nothing; if you have any formidable techniques, bring them out,” the Sloppy Daoist said with a chortle.

Boom! Boom!

The two simultaneously transformed into towering giants, each with three heads and six arms.

Each of the six arms of Adept Woodpass clutched a giant hammer, while the Sloppy Daoist remained barehanded. However, with the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he truly didn’t need any weapons at all. Actually, Ning didn’t need to use any weapons either; his [Starseizing Hand] made his hands comparable to Immortal-ranked magic treasures, after all. But the implications of the [Starseizing Hand] were simply too great; Ning didn’t dare to casually reveal this technique.

If he revealed it in front of Daofather Crimsonbright, that was one thing, but the Conclave of Immortal Destiny had too many eyes and ears present. Once he revealed the technique, news would surely spread like wildfire, and most likely many individuals within the Three Realms would learn of it. Perhaps some of the major powers who held grudges against Daoist Threelives would decide to wipe out Ning, the successor to Daoist Threelives’ legacy!

Ning didn’t dare to make this gamble. Thus, he had never used his bare hands to block magic treasures, even though his hands were even more powerful than the Darknorth swords!

“Growl...”

An enormous Turtle-Snake had appeared. It was even letting out a slight growl. The Sloppy Daoist, in the very center of the Turtle-Snake, came crushing downwards towards Adept Woodpass with an absolutely dominating air.

“This is my world...” Adept Woodpass narrowed his eyes, a look of

intoxication appearing on his face. Instantly, fruit tree saplings began to appear and grow throughout the sealed region. The saplings quickly grew into towering trees which died, transformed into ash, then gave birth to new saplings. Countless saplings were growing, and the three-headed, six-armed Adept Woodpass was himself like a human-shaped tree, with his six arms like tree branches and the giant warhammers in his hands like fruit.

BANG! The Sloppy Daoist's attack had arrived. His fist smashed down like thunder, crushing downwards. Adept Woodpass, in turn, waved a great warhammer.

BOOM! The warhammer met the fist. Adept Woodpass just took one heavy step back after another, deflecting the force of the collision. He continued to look like a human-shaped tree as he brandished about those six giant warhammers.

"I couldn't break through?" The Sloppy Daoist was surprised. "He truly is a peerless genius who was famous even as far back as three centuries ago who insisted on stifling himself for three hundred years as he waited for this day."

The Sloppy Daoist's attack form changed. He immediately executed the 'Wavefolding' secret art, and his attacks began to seem to turn into the waves of the sea, each wave more savage than the last as power continuously accumulated! Even Adept Woodpass, legendary for his defense, was finding it increasingly difficult to handle.

"For trees to grow, they need water!" Adept Woodpass' face changed slightly as he suddenly spoke out in a gravelly voice.

Rumble...

The trees that had sprung up within the sealed region began to be surrounded with a large amount of water. The vast amount of water swirled around the trees...and the feeling which Adept Woodpass gave off changed. He previously seemed like a man-shaped tree, but now he seemed more agile, with perfect dexterity.

"Two Grand Daos?"

“He actually has embarked on two Grand Daos?”

Lu Dongbin, the Xia Emperor, and the rest of the Pure Yang True Immortals were instantly shocked. During the previous duels as well as when he was within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, Adept Woodpass had always used the Grand Dao of Verdant Wood. This Grand Dao of the Watersource, Adept Woodpass had never before revealed.

The Grand Dao of the Verdant Wood. The Grand Dao of the Watersource. These were two Grand Daos that reinforced and supported each other. For a Wanxiang Adept to simultaneously train in two Grand Daos to such an extremely high level, at very least at the Grand Dao Domain level...in this entire Conclave, only Adept Woodpass had accomplished such a thing.

This seemingly amiable and honest Adept Woodpass had never before revealed this, and upon doing so, he shocked everyone.

*

1. Shennong, lit. ‘Divine Farmer’, is the name of one of China’s legendary Emperors from thousands of years ago. He was supposedly also the father of Chinese medicine, as he tested countless plants for their medicinal properties, then wrote them all down.

Chapter 29: Ji Ning Enters the Fray

“It’s hard to say who will win and who will lose.” Watching the battle, Lu Dongbin said softly, “The two of them really are similar...their battle styles are both majestic, using absolute power to crush their foes.”

“Right.” The Xia Emperor and the others nodded as well. Adept Woodpass and the Sloppy Daoist were indeed quite similar. And both were extremely skilled at defense!

As for attacking? The Sloppy Daoist had always used his bare hands, while Adept Woodpass used six large warhammers. But in reality, those six large warhammers were just bigger fists! Since Adept Woodpass didn’t have the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he naturally didn’t dare to actually use his bare hands to fight. The Sloppy Daoist’s fists were definitely no weaker than the large warhammers in power.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The two were clashing head on. The Sloppy Daoist was like a wave that was growing increasingly savage and powerful. Adept Woodpass, in turn, seemed incredibly resilient. His six arms swung about those six giant warhammers, counterattacking again and again.

Warhammers and fists. Boom, boom, boom! They slammed against each other repeatedly!

“They really are similar.” Ji Ning, seated behind King Yan, couldn’t help but mumble to himself, “Eldest apprentice-brother and Adept Woodpass are both so majestic in their attacks...and the more majestic their attacks, the harder it is to defend against them.”

Both of them had extremely strong defenses and would fight opponents head on! Other peerless geniuses, when encountering them, would most likely use up all of their divine power and then be forced to admit defeat.

“Eldest apprentice-brother seems like a black tortoise divine beast.”

“Adept Woodpass seems like a mobile, man-shaped tree.”

Just as Ning and the others were watching and pondering, suddenly...

The Sloppy Daoist, whose aura had been growing increasingly wild and explosive, suddenly came to a halt. The folding waves of attacks came to a halt as well. Adept Woodpass immediately noticed this weakening, and with a grand hammer blow, he directly caved in the Sloppy Daoist's chest.

BOOM! This hammer blow was incomparably heavy, and cracks appeared on the turtle shell runes on the Sloppy Daoist's body as he spat out a mouthful of blood.

BOOM BOOM BOOM! Adept Woodpass struck out repeatedly with his great hammer, showing no mercy at all in seizing the advantage. The Sloppy Daoist was smashed by multiple hammers in virtually the same instant. Heavily wounded, he struggled to defend while calling out: "I admit defeat!"

Whoosh! Adept Woodpass immediately retreated, the giant hammers in his hands disappearing as he returned to a normal size.

The Sloppy Daoist returned to a normal size as well. He looked at Adept Woodpass with a hint of resignation. "I lost...but I'm convinced by my defeat."

"Your attacks clearly had me at a disadvantage. Why did you suddenly stop?" Adept Woodpass asked, puzzled, "Your earlier attacks were becoming increasingly berserk...if that continued, I probably would've lost."

"If the 'wavefolding' secret art can continue to explosively increase in power into perpetuity, wouldn't that make me invincible?" The Sloppy Daoist shook his head.

Adept Woodpass now understood. Right. If the power of this wavefolding technique could increase without end...how crazy would that be?

"The length of time I sustained in using this secret art today...it is already the longest I have ever used it in all these years." The Sloppy Daoist shook his head and laughed. "But no matter what, this Conclave has proven to be a tremendous tempering experience to me, and my wavefolding abilities have increased dramatically as well."

Adept Woodpass instantly began to feel admiration for the Sloppy Daoist.

The top three...they had a chance of becoming a Daofather's disciple. Losing such a supreme chance was something that would definitely cause a major mental setback towards one's self-confidence. And yet, this Sloppy Daoist was actually able to recover from it almost instantly; he was even able to laugh. This sort of Dao-heart alone was already enough for Adept Woodpass to feel endless admiration.

In addition, when they fought earlier, Adept Woodpass also noticed that both their personalities and their paths were quite similar!

The path of Immortal cultivation was an incomparably difficult one. Upon finding a powerful figure that was very similar to one's self...they were practically bosom friends now. Adept Woodpass felt tremendous affection and admiration for him.

"Congratulations, fellow Daoist Woodpass," the Sloppy Daoist said with a laugh.

"This duel with you, fellow Daoist Sloppy, was a truly joyful one for me. It is rare for a person to encounter a bosom friend on the Immortal path, but you, fellow Daoist Sloppy, feel like a bosom friend to me...if you are free, you must come to the South Seas. When I'm free, I'll definitely visit the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery," Adept Woodpass said.

"Definitely." The Sloppy Daoist nodded as well. Over the course of this battle, he had also come to feel very positively towards Adept Woodpass.

There were some people who had never met before in the past, but upon meeting a single time would become bosom friends with each other! The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass were two such people...their Dao-hearts, their beliefs, and their ideas were all very similar. It was rare to encounter such a similar bosom-friend!

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The Xia Emperor, Lu Dongbin, and the rest of the Pure Yang True

Immortals all nodded silently. When Adept Woodpass had suddenly demonstrated yet another Grand Dao, they had all come to believe that the results of this battle had become hard to predict.

Adept Woodpass winning was reasonable.

“Wavefolding has a limit...upon reaching it, it will collapse and become uncontrollable.” Lu Dongbin nodded. “This is true even when Grand Emperor Xuanwu personally uses the technique. Although it might not actually collapse, upon reaching the limit, there will be no way to increase the power of the wavefolding any further. For this Sloppy Daoist to be able to use this technique for so long is already quite rare.”

“This Adept Woodpass is a rare talent as well. He was actually able to defeat the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu,” Mahasthamaprapta said. His gaze was focused on Adept Woodpass; clearly, he felt quite positively about him.

“For the Sloppy Daoist to be defeated makes sense,” the Xia Emperor said. “This Sloppy Daoist, when entering the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery, was a fairly ordinary disciple in the sect. However, he grew increasingly formidable; in training, he’s one of those that becomes increasingly brilliant as time goes on. His late-blooming potential is tremendous. In terms of amount of time spent training, the Sloppy Daoist has trained for much less time than Adept Woodpass has. For him to lose by a stroke isn’t strange. I imagine...that if we were to give them another century, most likely the Sloppy Daoist would be able to defeat Adept Woodpass.”

“Right.”

“Tremendous late-blooming potential.”

They all nodded.

There were far too many ‘geniuses’ in the Three Realms that were exceptionally brilliant early bloomers. Much rarer were those who were not only dazzling in the early stages, but were also able to train all the way through the Primal and Void levels, or even all the way up to the Celestial Immortal and True Immortal levels! Those who grew more

formidable as more time passed...these late-bloomers were the true, unpolished jade. After being 'sculpted' properly, they would become even more dazzling. Clearly, the Sloppy Daoist was one such person.

When he was young, he was very unremarkable. Afterwards, he entered the Black-White College but was still just an ordinary disciple. After even more time passed, he became the number one figure amongst the Black-White College's third generation disciples. And now, he was so incredibly dazzling in this Conclave for the entire major world.

This sort of rise...was quite terrifying.

"And more importantly...his heart!" Lu Dongbin sighed. "I can tell that this Sloppy Daoist doesn't actually know that Grand Emperor Xuanwu has taken note of him; he's been working hard this entire time in the hopes of making it into the top three and apprenticing himself to Daofather Crimsonbright. But just now, after losing that battle...he should have felt a tremendous psychological blow. And yet, he was able to almost instantly grow calm again, and he was even able to laugh. A heart like his...incredible."

"Right." They all nodded. The more these Pure Yang True Immortals watched the Sloppy Daoist, the more strengths they discovered. No wonder Grand Emperor Xuanwu accepted him as a disciple.

In this first battle to determine the top three...the Sloppy Daoist had been eliminated!

This caused the members of the Black-White College, such as Immortal Fivecraze, Mu Northson, and Adept Vastriver to all feel tremendous regret. Ning shook his head and sighed as well. There was nothing to be done; there was nothing that could be said regarding this loss. These two fought each other in a completely head-on manner...and in the end, the Sloppy Daoist had lost.

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The second battle had begun!

Adept Blackstone against Cangwu Jiu!

“Sloppy.” Yuchi Xiyue began to chat with the Sloppy Daoist. “You have good judgment. Can you tell who is going to win in this fight between Adept Blackstone and Cangwu Jiu?” The two had already begun battling within the grand sealing formation outside.

“Let me watch for a bit first.” The Sloppy Daoist watched in a seemingly casual manner, but his eyes were very intent. After watching for just a brief moment, he gently nodded. “Adept Blackstone has a major advantage. He has a higher chance of winning.”

“Oh?” Yuchi Xiyue was puzzled. “But that Cangwu Jiu seems to be quite formidable, and he’s also astonishingly fast. Why do you think Adept Blackstone has a better chance of winning?”

Yuchi Xiyue actually wanted to ask Ning his opinion as well. But this was the second duel; the third would be Ning’s. She naturally didn’t want to disturb him.

The Sloppy Daoist laughed, “Adept Blackstone is skilled in the Fuxi Staff Formation. Through his usage of the formation...he has actually made it so that Cangwu Jiu is already unable to use his speed to its full potential. Adept Blackstone can just hide inside the formation, and there’s no way Cangwu Jiu can even find him. Adept Blackstone has complete control over the tempo of this entire duel. He can attack when he wants to and flee when he wants to!”

“Based on what you are saying, by relying on his formation, Adept Blackstone is now invincible?” Yuchi Xiyue was puzzled.

“No.” The Sloppy Daoist shook his head. “This sort of duel has to come to a conclusion. Although Cangwu Jiu is trapped within the formation, if Adept Blackstone doesn’t actually attack, Cangwu Jiu can just relax and wait within the formation. He wouldn’t need to use up any divine power at all, but Adept Blackstone needs to maintain that powerful formation. It definitely is consuming a large amount of elemental ki. And, as time passes, I imagine that the Xia Emperor will also order Adept Blackstone to attack. Otherwise, who knows how long this would drag out to?”

Yuchi Xiyue nodded gently.

“Thus, in the end, it is still Adept Blackstone’s close combat ability that will determine victory or defeat! But of course, he still benefits from the advantages of his formation. And, based on what I saw from their close combat previously, Adept Blackstone is definitely no weaker than Cangwu Jiu in close combat!”

“Comparable power in close combat, but with Adept Blackstone having the advantage of a formation, and Cangwu Jiu being unable to fully utilize his speed...in this battle, Cangwu Jiu is completely countered. He should lose.”

Just as the Sloppy Daoist’s words were concluding...

Within the formation, Cangwu Jiu was like a hawk that had been trapped within a cage. He was injured repeatedly until finally, Adept Blackstone saw his opportunity and seized it, suddenly delivering a heavy wound to Cangwu Jiu. Cangwu Jiu was unwillingly forced to call out, “I admit defeat!”

And so, the second of the three had been chosen...Adept Blackstone!

“Xiamang, are you trying to prevent this Cangwu Jiu from entering the top three? It wouldn’t have been so bad if he had encountered Ji Ning, Xiamang Zishan, the Sloppy Daoist, or even Adept Woodpass; he would’ve been able to make full use of his speed and agility. He’s at the greatest disadvantage when fighting against Adept Blackstone, a master of the Fuxi Staff Formation,” Lu Dongbin said with a smirk.

“The ambitions of the Cangwu clan are a bit too grand,” the Xia Emperor said calmly.

He was suppressing them by doing this! The other major clans all had extremely deep roots of power; if given a chance, they would be able to soar into the skies! And so, he let Ji Ning fight Youngflame Zhan while having Adept Blackstone fight Cangwu Jiu. In truth, this was his scheme to suppress them.

As for Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and the others, they didn’t come from major clans.

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The third duel was now beginning.

"Ji Ning, be careful." Yu Wei held Ning's hand and spoke gently to him.

Ning nodded lightly, then rose and began to walk towards the grand sealing formation outside the hall!

Chapter 30: Desiring To Accept a Disciple

Ji Ning and Xiamang Zishan both walked towards the outside of the main hall.

Within the main hall of the Skylight Palace. The nine Pure Yang True Immortals and nearly one thousand Celestial Immortals were all gazing towards these two young men. Two of the top three had been determined; Adept Woodpass and Adept Blackstone. Now, only the last one remained...

“Which of them will win?” Lu Dongbin said softly.

The Xia Emperor and the others were all silent. Only after a long moment did Truelord Chiji say slowly, “Their power is comparable, and both are extremely skilled in close combat. The end of this battle will most likely come when one side runs out of divine power and admits defeat.”

“Right.” Lu Dongbin nodded gently as well.

“Zishan has a better chance,” the Xia Emperor said.

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Yu Wei looked quietly at Ning. She knew very well that Ning wanted to seize this chance to become a Daofather’s apprentice and thus soar into the heavens. She was eager for his success...but she hoped even more that Ning would be safe.

“Ji Ning, be careful.” Yu Wei watched him nervously.

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“One last step before entering the top three.” Ninelotus was seated behind the Dongyan Forefather. In this moment, she was quietly hoping to herself, “Ji Ning, I hope you succeed.”

Although they had broken up, in her heart, Ji Ning would forever be a peerless genius. She didn’t want to see him discouraged and defeated.

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“Master.” Little Qing raised her head, staring at the massive curtain of

water and the scene within it.

“Ning, son...” The Whitewater Hound was even more restless.

“Senior apprentice-brother, you have to win!” Mu Northson called out in a high voice.

Atop the clouds, within the grand sealing formation.

Ning and Xiaman Zishan stared at each other from afar. Both of them just stood there with seeming tranquility. However, underneath the tranquility, there was a savage self-confidence...they had to win! Both of them felt incomparable desire for entering the top three, but to do so, they had to defeat the opponent before them.

One of them was a young man dressed in violet; the other was a youth dressed in furs.

Their auras were completely different. The violet-robed young man was born with a dominating aura, as well as an air of nobility that came from being born into an imperial clan.

By contrast, due to Ji Ning’s sufferings in his former life as well as this life, Ning looked like just an ordinary, bumpkin-like youth...but due to having come from a world of peace, he showed neither subservience nor arrogance.

“We meet again.” Xiamang Zishan’s voice boomed out heroically. “Last time, you were defeated by me. This time, you will be defeated again.”

“I have only trained for a bit more than thirty years,” Ning said calmly. “It has only been ten or so years since I became a Zifu Disciple...and during these ten years, I’ve reached my current level. That year of nonstop battling in the world of the Diagram was definitely equivalent to ten years of hard training in the outside world. The battle between us was more than half a year ago...and during that half a year, my power has vastly surpassed your imagination.”

Xiamang Zishan’s pupils shrank. Indeed. Ji Ning’s short period of training truly did cause astonishment.

“You improved during the past half year. So did I.” Xiamang Zishan’s natural, inborn aura of arrogance caused him to release an angered laugh. “If you have any techniques to show, go ahead and show them. Otherwise...when you are defeated, you won’t be thoroughly convinced.”

“Come.” Ning looked calmly towards Xiamang Zishan. This sort of calmness...masked an even more berserk desire for battle!

Xiamang Zishan’s body instantly flickered as he transformed into a 60-meter tall giant that had three heads and six arms.

With regards to the [Heavenly Transformation], it was true that Ning had spent several fewer centuries training in this technique compared to Xiamang Zishan. However, unlike other divine abilities such as the [Myriad Hibernating Venoms], the amount of power the early stages of the [Heavenly Transformation] granted significantly weaker. In the early stages, other divine abilities were better than the [Heavenly Transformation].

However, the latter stages of [Heavenly Transformation], especially during the Empyrean God stage, were truly and terrifyingly formidable.

As for now?

Ning used the second Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand]; thus, [Heavenly Transformation] didn’t increase the power of his hands in even the slightest.

“Taste my staf!” Xiamang Zishan bellowed with incomparable savagery.

Three black steel staffs simultaneously smashed through the air, carrying an invincible aura as they slammed towards Ning.

Staves were heavy weapons. Only powerful experts with truly great strength would be able to unleash the advantages of staves. Compared to sabers and swords, staves were inferior in terms of agility. Compared to spears, which were also long weapons and even had sharp tips, staves naturally were naturally inferior in terms of piercing power.

But staves had a tremendous advantage as well. This was...in smashing as one pleased! In the Three Realms, especially amongst Empyrean Gods

who were famed for their strength, there were very many people who used staves! The power of a single staff blow could pierce through the heavens...and could smash apart the earth!

These two were the same in terms of strength, level of cultivation, and divine abilities. A staff-wielder was naturally much more savage and overbearing than a sword-wielder; this was due to the differences in the weapons. The 'best' type of weapon was the weapon that was most suited to you...and clearly, Xiamang Zishan was best-suited for wielding staves.

BOOM!

The staves cleaved through the skies, causing the world to change in color.

Ning wielded six Immortal swords in his hands. Although it wasn't too suitable for him to brashly use Immortal swords to block head-on, Ning wanted to give it a try, given the power of his divine abilities. He blocked the attacks head on!

The three staves thundered forth with the power of a flood!

They were met by six dazzling sword-lights!

They smashed directly onto each other. They caused the surrounding area to tremble with the terrifying force of the collision...and the result of this head-on strike was that the two were actually on par with each other!

"We're actually on par." Ning was startled. "Last time, I was at an absolute disadvantage. I've made repeated breakthroughs...but this Xiamang Zishan has made some breakthroughs as well. It seems there's no hope of defeating him in a head-on fight. In addition, the amount of divine power my [Starseizing Hand] uses up is quite astonishing; it can't be used for prolonged combat!"

Ning knew exactly what his own weakness was. Although he was very powerful in the Grand Dao of the Sword, with regards to 'ordinary' Daos, he had mastered only two Dao-Paths.

Xiamang Zishan's 'Grand Dao of Lightning' might be a bit weaker than Ning's own 'Grand Dao of the Sword', but he had mastered four complete

‘normal’ Dao-Paths! In addition, after spending the past half year constantly infusing all four Daos into his staff technique, his staves had become increasingly powerful.

The power of Ning’s divine ability compensated for this weakness...but the power of his divine ability resulted in a similarly astonishing rate of using divine power. After fighting for a prolonged period of time, his divine power would probably be exhausted.

“I am a Sword Immortal; why should I fight him head-on?” Ning’s swordplay began to change. Previously, his six streaks of sword-light had flown out in straight lines, but they now changed. Ning’s sword-light became like an unending flow of water, constantly striking in a steady stream towards Xiamang Zishan. Xiamang Zishan continued to do as he normally did, releasing his staff strikes as he pleased, either smashing down, lashing out, or suddenly sweeping forth.

Ning’s swordplay was like water, flowing without an end. Xiamang Zishan’s staff techniques were unable to accomplish anything at all...but in turn, Ning was unable to leave even a single wound on Xiamang Zishan’s body.

“There’s no chance at all. It seems I’ll have to use that unfinished sword technique,” Ning mused to himself.

Whoosh!

Ning’s sword changed once again. Of Ning’s six Immortal swords...some of them suddenly blazed like fire, containing the fierce sharpness of the Dao of the Sword! Others flowed like an unbroken stream of water, continuously moving to entangle and hinder his foe! The rest fluctuated unpredictably with tremendous speed!

After, this sort of sword technique placed a great deal of strain on Ning’s mind and spirit upon execution.

This sort of combat technique was something Ning had thought up when he had watched the Sloppy Daoist battle with his ‘wavefolding’ technique. The Sloppy Daoist used four arms to defend and two arms to attack, and then formed a ‘folding’, circular wave of power...although

Ning didn't understand it, he had still been stimulated by the Sloppy Daoist's combat method.

"The sword can be used as a spear, but it doesn't have as much penetrative power as the spear. It can be used as a warblade, but it doesn't have a warblade's savage chopping power. It can be used as a staff, but it isn't as heavy as a staff..."

"Swords have two edges; they are incomparably agile, and can be used in many different manners of battle. After using the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability, if I were to use the six arms to fight in different manners... perhaps they might affect each other and cause a loss of power, but it's also possible that just like with the Sloppy Daoist, the power will actually join together increase."

Prior to this battle, Ning had been constantly visualizing and hypothesizing regarding this technique in his mind. Earlier, during the previous battle, he had been completely silent, partially because he had been spending part of his attention in pondering the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] that he had learned back at the Black-White College. Within the manual, there was a combination technique that used the Five Elements. Ning carefully reflected on these things, and had already come up with a vague technique in his mind. In this moment, he unleashed it.

Whoooosh.

Sword-light like water, sword-light like fire, and sword-light that fluctuated unpredictably...

Ji Ning was incomparably agile and graceful, occasionally advancing and occasionally retreating. His swordplay became similarly illusory and fluctuating as large amounts of sword-light howled everywhere. Suddenly, all sorts of different types of sword-light appeared...it was like a melody that was occasionally soft, occasionally bright, sometimes flowing, and sometimes explosive...

The Daos of Water, Fire, Wind, Space, and the Sword.

He infused all of his insights into the Dao of the Sword and into his hands. Ning had a wonderful feeling, as though many different types of

sword techniques were cooperating together and supporting each other. It was all so natural that he didn't even have to intentionally come up with next sword techniques; everything came out naturally, in accordance with this marvelous feeling.

He didn't want to disrupt this sort of feeling; he wanted to flow with it and let it unleash what it could!

“Beautiful.”

“So beautiful.”

“So swordplay can actually become this beautiful!” The nearly one thousand Celestial Immortal Patriarchs within the main hall of the Summerlight Palace all felt a carefree, relaxed feeling in their heart as they watched. Ning's three-headed, six-armed form executed various different sword techniques. It was just like he was painting a beautiful watercolor painting. The watercolor splashed everywhere, but it had a beauty that moved the heart.

In this moment, Ning's form was like the wind. His six Immortal swords were graceful and agile, putting the exquisite essence of the sword on complete display.

The sword was by nature incomparably complicated. Even the most simple of sword techniques could be divided into thirteen different basic movements, which was far more complicated than the spear, the staff, and the saber. This sort of complicatedness...to a true expert, it represented many materials to work with, allowing him to produce a consummately beautiful product. For a weakling, however, too much complicated was actually a bad thing.

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“Genius!” Lu Dongbin, within the main hall of the Skylight Palace, couldn't help but sigh in amazement. “He's actually able to enter such a deep state during such a crucial battle. If my judgment is correct, he is currently in a state of no-thought, where everything simply flows from the heart...when executing swordplay in this state, the power is naturally going to be extraordinary. In addition, he will also firmly memorize these

extraordinary sword techniques. After this battle ends, his insight into the Dao and into swordplay will both rise dramatically.”

“He is indeed a rare genius of the Dao of the Sword,” Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta couldn’t help but say. “We Buddhists are willing to accept this sort of genius.”

“He has only mastered two ordinary Daos, but his Dao of the Sword is at such a high level that he is absolutely the number one genius Sword Immortal of the Conclave.” Lu Dongbin couldn’t help but say, “He was indeed born to be a Sword Immortal. His talent in the Dao of the Sword is absolutely inconceivable. Xiamang...if you don’t accept this Ji Ning, can I take him on as my disciple?”

“Eastflower, is your heart feeling itchy?”

“Even the Buddhists are feeling itchy. Why can’t I?” Lu Dongbin looked back at the Xia Emperor.

The Xia Emperor shook his head. “All of the top six in this Conclave must first be given to my master and his many disciples for choosing! If no one picks Ji Ning, then you, Lu Dongbin, can be his master. What do you say?”

“Bullshit! Are you telling me that you guys won’t choose a potential peerless Sword Immortal like him?” Lu Dongbin immediately shook his head.

Chapter 31: Closed Door

The Xia Emperor laughed, saying nothing else. Ji Ning and the others were of the Grand Xia Emperor's world to begin with; thus, as the saying goes, 'fertilizing water must not be allowed to flow into the fields of another'. He naturally had to keep these individuals who had a chance of becoming experts of the Three Realms on his side. How could he release them?

"You old scallywag." Lu Dongbin pursed his lips. "Look at how smug your smile is. Haven't you noticed that Ji Ning's power is currently increasing, and that his opponent Xiamang Zishan is at an increasing disadvantage? This is someone of your Xiamang clan."

"Indeed, in this battle, Zishan is going to lose." The Xia Emperor was extremely calm. "I have nothing to say if he is beaten by Ji Ning. In addition, given Zishan's temperament...he's too brash and wild, making him excessively hard and brittle. Given Master's temperament, I imagine that he would choose Ji Ning even if both he and Ji Ning were in the running."

"This guy Xiamang..."

The other Pure Yang True Immortals all shook their heads. Still...given that the Xia Emperor had spoken out, all of them had no choice but to give up any thoughts of acquiring Ji Ning. In truth, given how turbulent the undercurrents were in the Three Realms right now, and how the Grand Xia Dynasty's major world was one that was exceptionally blessed by karmic luck, this world did indeed have a very good chance of giving birth to a future expert of the Three Realms.

However...not even they fully understood how enormous the impending tribulation would be.

The greater a tribulation, the more powerful major figures would be born from it. In fact, even multiple Daofathers might be born! However, they would be spread out throughout the three thousand major worlds and the trillion minor worlds. It was very hard to say exactly how many experts

the Grand Xia Dynasty's major world would give birth to.

"The Sloppy Daoist, as a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu, must be blessed with luck."

"Of the top three...one of them will become a disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright. He too will be blessed by luck. For this single Conclave of Immortal Destiny to give birth to two future experts would be quite remarkable."

And precisely because of this, their desire to acquire Ji Ning wasn't too burning; after all, Ning was still just a Wanxiang Adept. No one could tell how far he would be able to actually make it...

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Within the grand sealing formation.

Xiamang Zishan was growing increasingly surprised and worried. The Ji Ning before him wielded those six Immortal swords as though they were parts of a moving melody. They danced with tremendous beauty, and just watching them felt like a form of enjoyment! But this sort of 'enjoyment' wasn't something which Xiamang Zishan could withstand. He only felt increasingly stifled, and no matter how he fought back, he remained at a disadvantage!

Ji Ning's swords were simply too inconceivable. They were savage, gentle, fast, slow...Xiamang Zishan was unable to keep up, and wounds began to appear repeatedly on his body. Blood sprayed everywhere as his divine body had to heal repeatedly as well.

"No."

"I don't accept this. I'm going to win. I have to win." Xiamang Zishan's eyes were crackling with thunder as he grew increasingly berserk.

If before this, he could be described as 'dominating' in a heroic manner that subjugated his foes, then his current berserk status was like a sort of utter madness, a madness born from despair.

He was struggling to hang on! And it was lucky for Ning that he did. His

struggle to hang on allowed Ning to continue to stay immersed in this wondrous state for even longer. This sort of level of no-thought didn't actually mean that one had lost all consciousness; rather, it allowed one to unleash one's full potential and be guided by the invisible hands of the heavens...simply put, it was as though gods were helping him reach a perfect state that he normally would find it hard to enter.

For example, some poets might suddenly feel divinely inspired and write a line of poetry that would be passed down for ages...but for the rest of their lives, they would never again be able to write something to match it.

This was the wondrous state which Ning was currently immersed into.

"I admit defeat!" Suddenly, an unhappy, dissatisfied voice rang out.

Only now did Ning come back to his senses. Whoosh. Ning came to a halt. The area around him was completely splattered with blood, and half of Xiaman Zishan's body was lying off in the distance. His two halves quickly flew to each other and began to fuse together, but his bloodshot eyes remained filled with discontent.

"A pity that it ended so soon." Ning understood how rare it was for him to have entered such a state just now. If Xiamang Zishan had been able to hold on for a bit longer, it would've been even better for him. However, more than half of Ning's divine power had been used up as well; it was enough for him to have battled for so long.

And then...a look of wild joy appeared in Ning's eyes. "I won!"

"I won."

"Won."

"The top three. The Xia Emperor will send a recording of my battle to Daofather Crimsonbright. He might choose me as a disciple." Ning was filled with eager expectation. "But ideally, I shall become number one in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. That way, I'll have a better chance of being chosen."

"I won."

The imperial citadel plaza was filled with delegates from the 3600 commanderies. Amongst them, many of the delegates from Stillwater Commandery began to call out in celebration. Although they each belonged to different powers within Stillwater, they were all from the same commandery! They had all felt regret when the Sloppy Daoist had been defeated, but now that Ji Ning had successfully entered the top three, they all felt incomparably proud.

“Senior apprentice-brother, senior apprentice-brother, I knew you’d do it! Haha, and to think the Heavenly Treasures Mountain ranked Xiamang Zishan at number one. He still got taken care of by my senior apprentice-brother!” Mu Northson was incomparably delighted. He called out loudly, “Number one! Number one! Take number one in this Conclave!”

“Take number one!” Little Qing spoke out in the human tongue as well as she called out in excitement.

The Whitewater Hound grinned as well.

A series of joyful shouts swept the plaza.

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Yu Wei watched from afar as Ning walked out from within the grand sealing formation. In this moment, all of the Celestial Immortal Patriarchs within the main hall of the Skylight Palace were watching Ning. Ning was the most dazzling figure of them all at present.

Yu Wei felt a surge of excitement as well. Excitement for Ning. “Right. He’s entered the top three. Perhaps Ji Ning shall become the Daofather’s disciple.”

.....

Ninelotus was watching from afar as well. A hint of a faint smile appeared on her face. In this instant...her heart and soul suddenly became tranquil. With regards to Ning and Yu Wei being together, she still felt jealousy, but with regards to Ning himself...she was filled with nothing but hopes for the best for him.

.....

With the most important top three victors of this Conclave being now chosen, all three of them advanced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the main hall of the Skylight Palace, awaiting the Grand Xia Emperor's orders.

Even the Celestial Immortal Patriarchs had a hint of envy in their eyes.

“One of the three will definitely become the Daofather’s disciple.”

“Such luck...and yet, we can’t touch that luck.”

“Perhaps in the future, one of them shall become a figure which we must revere with tremendous respect.” The Celestial Immortal Patriarchs all sighed with emotion.

Still...only one of the three would become a Daofather’s disciple. The other two by comparison wouldn’t be nearly as well-off. If they were lucky, they might become a disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal, but there was an enormous difference between becoming the disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal and a Daofather’s disciple.

Upon becoming a Daofather’s disciple, it was virtually assured that one would become a Celestial Immortal.

However, far too many disciples of a Pure Yang True Immortal would fail in their Celestial Tribulation. It could only be said that compared to ordinary cultivators, they had a much higher chance. Perhaps not even one out of a hundred thousand Void-level Earth Immortals would successfully pass the tribulation. If a Pure Yang True Immortal patiently taught his disciple, then perhaps one out of ten might become a Celestial Immortal.

And individual variables mattered as well. Some were very skilled at training disciples, while others were not.

For example, in terms of training disciples, Lu Dongbin was clearly far superior to the Xia Emperor. Lu Dongbin’s disciples even included another Pure Yang True Immortal. This was often spoken of and praised in the Three Realms.

.....

The Xia Emperor looked down upon the three youths, revealing a smile. "I have to congratulate you. You are all extremely fortunate...and in the future, many years from now, you will understand how special this Conclave of Immortal Destiny was for you! This is a critical turning point in your lives. It is clear that all three of you shall soar into the heavens. Only, it's hard to say exactly how high you shall each soar."

Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all listened obediently.

"One of you three shall definitely become the Daofather's disciple," the Xia Emperor said. "As for the other two...I can promise you that you shall both become disciples of a Pure Yang True Immortal."

Whoooosh. The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals were all stunned. What?! For a Daofather to take a disciple was one thing, but the other two would also become the disciples of a Pure Yang True Immortal? Pure Yang True Immortals didn't casually take on disciples either. Why would two suddenly be taken on today?

"It seems this Conclave truly is special. First a Daofather chooses a disciple, but then even Pure Yang True Immortals will take on disciples." These Celestial Immortals now all realized how unique this was.

In truth, because they didn't have a high enough status, they only came to realize this now. As for the experts and major powers of the Three Realms, they had long ago understood that a storm was coming...and that this storm would most likely be a major one. Naturally, these major powers would have to plan early in advance!

"A Daofather's disciple." Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all wished to become a Daofather's disciple.

As for a Pure Yang True Immortal? There was a thousandfold difference between a Daofather and a Pure Yang True Immortal! For Ji Ning, in particular...since he had already received the legacy of Daoist Threelives, and the Stellar Hall provided guidance in multiple Dao-Paths and Grand Daos...what was a Pure Yang True Immortal? They weren't that attractive for Ning. He still felt more desire for becoming a Daofather's disciple.

"But of course, all of you will desire to become the Daofather's disciple,

and so these final battles are still very important," the Xia Emperor said. "Two hours from now, the three of you shall engage in the final duels, divided into three sets."

Ji Ning battling Adept Blackstone.

Adept Blackstone fighting Adept Woodpass.

Adept Woodpass battling Ji Ning.

Three duels...each person would compete twice against the others.

"I shall use a water scrying technique to record all three duels and give it to Master. Master shall watch all three of your duels, then choose who his disciple will be," the Xia Emperor said. "In these three competitions, you need to display out all of your abilities; after all, the number one victor in this Conclave isn't necessarily going to be the person the Daofather shall choose. The choice is his. But of course...if you become number one, the chances the Daofather shall choose you might be a bit higher."

Ning and the other three all waited quietly.

"Now, all three of you shall enter the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. Two hours in the outside world shall be equivalent to a month of quiet training in the Diagram," the Xia Emperor said. "In this month, you need to reflect on the experiences you have gained in this Conclave and prepare for the final competition."

"Yes," Ning and the other three all said.

The Xia Emperor waved his arm, and the Diagram floated up into the skies. Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone were all sucked into it.

.....

Within the Diagram. The moonlight continued to shine everywhere. Atop a mountain peak, Ning seated himself in the lotus position. In two other corners of the peak were Adepts Blackstone and Woodpass, also seated in the lotus position.

These three were the most powerful competitors in this Conclave. Of the three of them...only one could become a Daofather's disciple.

“Mm...?” Ning sat there in the lotus position, beginning to reflect on what he had learned and gained during his battle against Xiamang Zishan. Many insights began to fill his mind...

Chapter 32: Number One

In terms of appearance, Ji Ning appeared the youngest of the three, like a youth. However, although that was younger than his actual age of over thirty, the other two had trained for more than a century.

“This is...?” Adept Blackstone and Adept Woodpass both turned their heads to stare at Ning. They saw Ning sit there in the lotus position as sudden gusts of wind began to swirl around him. At the same time... ripples of the Dao descended.

“What? He broke through?” Adept Woodpass and Adept Blackstone both felt shock. They could naturally tell that Ning should’ve completed an entire Dao-Path pertaining to wind.

“He was actually able to master yet another Dao-Path at such a critical moment. Ji Ning was formidable to begin with. In close combat, Adept Saberslave and Xiamang Zishan were both very powerful, but both were defeated by him. For him to make a breakthrough now...his close combat ability will most likely be superior to even me.” Adept Blackstone made some calculations. Instantly, he began to grow nervous.

During the competition in the world of the Diagram, he had somewhat of an advantage. This was because the most important part in that competition was to stay alive and have enough talismans! Naturally, he was able to put on full display all of his advantages gained from his mastery of formations. But in a one-on-one fight, where one side had to win, he was at a disadvantage. The aid provided to him by his formations skills wasn’t as significant.

“However, the Daofather isn’t necessarily going to pick the number one winner for his disciple,” Adept Blackstone mused to himself. “When the duel comes, I’m going to unleash all of my insights in the art of formations so as to let the Daofather see my full potential...and I believe he will choose me.”

He was very powerful in close combat as well, close to Xiamang Zishan’s level. But he was more confident in his formations ability! He

had spent far, far too much of his blood and sweat on formations.

.....

Ning could sense the ripples of the Dao from around him. He opened his eyes, revealing a hint of a smile. The Dao of the Gale...he had finally mastered this Dao-Path!

Actually, long ago when he had mastered the Dao of the Raindrop, his Dao of the Inferno and Dao of the Gale had already been close to mastery. These two Daos had been just slightly lacking...but the many battles over the past year had been very helpful towards him. In the end, he had finally mastered both the Dao of the Inferno and the Dao of the Gale.

“Three Daos. Rainwater, Inferno, Gale. I’ve mastered them all.” Ning had primarily been spending his time meditating on these three Daos, and they had all advanced in unison. It wasn’t too strange that by the time of the Conclave, he would have mastered all three.

“My Dao of the Sword improved tremendously as well,” Ning celebrated. During his earlier battle with Xiamang Zishan, his insights into the Dao of the Sword had indeed increased significantly. However...there was a huge gap in difficulty between the seventh, eighth, and ninth stances of the [Three-Foot Sword].

After all, the eighth stance was comparable to an ordinary Celestial Immortal’s technique, while the ninth stance was a skill that allowed a Loose Immortal like Immortal Northwalker to unleash the power of a Celestial Immortal!

Ning’s current level of insights into the Dao of the Sword was between the seventh and the eighth stance. He had yet to be able to unleash the eighth stance...but he had still improved enormously. His combat power had risen by a large amount.

“The Xia Emperor gave us a month. During this month, I need to fuse the Daos of Rainwater, Inferno, and Gale into my Dao of the Sword, making the power of my sword increase even further,” Ning mused to himself, then calmed down and began to meditate.

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace. Everyone was waiting for the two hours to conclude, and for the three final duels to begin. These three final duels would be recorded and given to Daofather Crimsonbright to watch.

“In his battle with Xiamang Zishan, Ji Ning entered a state of no-thought; I imagine that he must’ve improved considerably. By the time they have left their secluded meditation, Ji Ning’s power will most likely have risen significantly yet again. In terms of attack power, he is most likely the absolute number one in this Conclave. As for Adept Woodpass, he should be the absolute number one in terms of defense. Adept Blackstone...he’s a bit worse off. If this was a battle in the outside world, his skill in formations would make it difficult for others to slay him. But this is a duel in the Conclave in which a victor must be determined,” Truelord Chiji said calmly. “As I see it, the number one position should go to either Ji Ning or Adept Woodpass.”

“Mm.”

“Right.”

“It’ll be a bit harder for Adept Blackstone.”

Lu Dongbin and the others all nodded in agreement. Even the Xia Emperor nodded as well. “Ji Ning has mastered yet another Dao-Path in secluded meditation in the world of the Diagram. This should be part of what he gained during the previous battle with Xiamang Zishan.”

“No-thought, no-self; as expected, he has gained power after having entered that state of mind.” The Pure Yang True Immortals were all quite calm.

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Comparatively speaking, in the final three duels, who won and who lost wasn’t as important. This was because the Daofather wouldn’t necessarily choose the top-ranked person. However, without question... the victor would have a better chance of being chosen. After all, over the course of history, victory and defeat usually determined who would be

acclaimed as the hero.

In the blink of an eye, two hours passed.

Swish swish swish! Three figures flew out from the world of the Diagram, appearing on the main hall.

“Your Imperial Majesty.” Ning and the other two both called out in unison with respect.

“With regards to these three duels, the first shall see Ji Ning against Adept Blackstone,” the Xia Emperor instructed. “After these three duels, I’ll arrange for all of you to go to the imperial treasury of my Grand Xia Dynasty and pick out a divine ability of your choice. However, compared to becoming the disciple of the Daofather, choosing a divine ability is naturally a small matter.”

Ning and the other two just listened quietly.

“Let it begin, then,” the Xia Emperor instructed.

“Yes.” Ning and Adept Blackstone exchanged a glance, and then both walked towards the outside of the hall.

.....

By now, Ning and the other two no longer had any more tricks up their sleeves. They had long ago unleashed all of their abilities, which was why Lu Dongbin and the others were able to get a very good picture of what would happen!

Adept Blackstone was clearly a master of formations, but Ning just stood there without moving, just using a Waterflame Lotus to protect himself. As soon as Adept Blackstone moved near him, Ning would fight him...but if he didn’t, then Ning wouldn’t move about randomly.

And so...

Adept Blackstone began to put on his ‘performance’, unleashing all of his abilities as a master of formations. The seemingly simple Fuxi Staff Formation unleashed one mighty formation after another. Some were illusory, others were meant to kill, while still others were meant to seal.

In fact, the formations actually were layered atop each other, causing the area to be filled with illusions and killing intent.

But Ning didn't even try to break the formation; all he had to do was wait for Adept Blackstone to move close to him and start fighting.

Only after putting on a show of displaying his formidable formations did Adept Blackstone begin to actually fight with Ning. And indeed...in close combat, now that Ning had improved even further, he ended up defeating Adept Blackstone!

In the first battle...Ji Ning won!

.....

As for the second battle, Adept Woodpass and Adept Blackstone fought against each other. Adept Woodpass was even more shameless than Ning! Although Ning had stood there without moving, he had still at least engaged Adept Blackstone in a frenzied battle.

Adept Woodpass, however, had just stood there as unmoving as a mountain. Like a giant, human-shaped tree, he just stood there and let Adept Blackstone whale on him. No matter how Adept Blackstone attacked, Adept Woodpass was still able to withstand it...and he didn't even counter-attack! And so, just like that...Adept Blackstone's divine power ended up being exhausted. He was forced to admit defeat!

In the second battle, Adept Woodpass had won!

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The third duel was between Ning and Adept Woodpass. This battle was clearly much more exciting than the last two. In the two previous battles, Ning and Adept Woodpass hadn't dared to run about randomly within Adept Blackstone's formations. In this battle, the two fought each other head on!

Ji Ning was the most powerful attacker in this Conclave! His [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was at the twelfth stage, his Dao of the Sword was at an extremely high level, and he had three complete Dao-Paths as well as the [Starseizing Hand]!

In this battle...

Ning put his sword arts on full display, wildly unleashing all of his attacking abilities. At the beginning, Adept Woodpass had attempted to counter-attack, but he was quickly forced by Ning into a point where he was spending 90% of his efforts on defense, with only the occasional counter! This was because Ning was different compared to the Sloppy Daoist; the Sloppy Daoist's wavefolding technique would eventually collapse, whereas Ning's sword arts would not. His sword arts came out in an endless series, causing Adept Woodpass to begin to be injured. With each injury, he would have to spend divine power to heal it...and in the end, Adept Woodpass was forced to admit defeat!

"I used up more than 70% of my divine power in wild attacks before he admitted defeat." Ning felt cold sweat trickle down his back as well. His [Starseizing Hand] used up far too much divine power. If Adept Woodpass had been able to hold on for a bit longer, Ning's own divine power probably would've been used up.

.....

Three duels. Ning won two! Adept Woodpass won one! Adept Blackstone won none!

"He won!"

"Ahaha, won, won, WON!!!" The Stillwater Commandery delegation in the imperial citadel plaza let out an incomparably excited roar of delight. They all called out jubilantly and their roars of laughter rang out.

There were more than a million delegates present from the 3600 commanderies and the Four Seas, but the number of them who knew that the Daofather would choose a disciple could be counted on one hand. To them...seizing the number one position in the Conclave was a matter of the utmost glory.

"Number one, number one!" Mu Northson was so excited, his entire face was red. He was incomparably delighted as he said, "My senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning is number one!"

Adept Vastriver sighed with emotion. “In the past, when I saw junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning kill Youngflame Nong, all sorts of worries had appeared. But unexpectedly, after such a short period of time, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning actually became number one in this Conclave. This is really...a miracle. A real miracle!”

“NUMBER ONE!” Immortal Fivecraze was so excited that he actually tossed his gourd of wine to the ground. He seemed to have gone mad, and was so excited he seemed berserk. “Ahahaha! A disciple of my Black-White College has become number one in this Conclave! This has never before happened in the entire history of my Black-White College, never ever! Haha, the champion of the Conclave...belongs to a disciple of my Black-White College! Haha, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!”

“Ji Ning truly is incredible.” Northmont Baiwei’s breathing was rather ragged. He was simply too excited. “He actually became number one in the Conclave. I didn’t even dare imagine this happening. This is truly unfathomable.”

“Master is so amazing.” Little Qing’s eyes were glowing.

“Big brother...” The Whitewater Hound thought back to the scenes of Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow teaching Ji Ning swordplay. “Can you see this? You taught him movement arts...taught him swordplay...and now, sword in hand, he has become the champion of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny of this entire vast Grand Xia Dynasty! Can you see it? Can you see it?!”

The Whitewater Hound’s tears began to fall. He was incomparably agitated.

Chapter 33: Grand Emperor Xuanwu

Deep within the void of the Three Realms. There was a world here that had been born from chaos, filled with endless, fathomless amounts of seawater.

The fathomless oceans had several islands within it, and Immortal cultivators as well as Immortals were very common.

At the very center of this ocean world, atop an island surrounded by the waters of the sea, there were a series of indescribably beautiful palaces. Immortal maidens, celestial generals, and celestial soldiers were everywhere to be seen. On the top of the highest palace, there was an enormous diagram of a yin-yang taiji symbol that hung high up in the air, constantly emanating boundless amounts of white and black light...

An old black-haired man was seated atop a bed formed from clouds, and the enormous yin-yang taiji diagram was directly above him.

“Mm?” The old black-haired man opened his eyes. “Novice,” he said calmly.

Beneath him were a pair of male and female novices, who were obediently awaiting his orders. The golden-robed male novice immediately responded obediently, “Patriarch.”

“Go and call out your uncle-master, Seatopple,” the black-haired elder instructed.

“Yes.” The golden-robed male novice acknowledged with respect, then took a single step forward through a ripple in the air that had appeared. He teleported away and disappeared.

.....

Deep within the sea of this world, there was an underwater palace. The golden-robed novice teleported straight into the depths of the sea, and where he passed by the waters of the sea parted, allowing him to go straight to the jade-colored underwater palace. There were many soldiers and guards protecting this underwater palace, and upon seeing this

person approach, they immediately moved to block him.

“Uncle-master Seatopple,” the golden-robed novice called out. His voice echoed within the sea.

Within the underwater estate. There was a tall, skinny man dressed in deep green armor whose eyes flashed with deep green light and a gaze that caused the hearts of others to quiver. In front of him was a white-robed cultivator. The two were happily drinking and chatting with each other.

“It isn’t that I, your big brother, don’t want to help you. You must understand, I’ve been confined to this place by Master...I want to help, but there’s nothing I can do. But come, come, come, let’s stop talking about these unhappy things. Let’s drink.” The tall, skinny man in the deep green armor lifted up a large bowl of wine, drinking happily. That bowl contained at least a kilogram of wine, but he gulped it all down at once.

“Eh?” The green-armored man’s face suddenly changed. With but a thought...

Whoosh. The golden-robed novice that had been outside the underwater palace was instantly teleported inside.

“Uncle-master Seatopple.” The golden-robed novice bowed respectfully.

“Apprentice-nephew, why have you come to my place?” The green-armored man asked hurriedly. Although this golden-robed novice was merely a Celestial Immortal, he was permanently stationed by the side of Grand Emperor Xuanwu to carry out his orders. Thus, the green-armored man was very courteous to him and didn’t dare show him any courtesy.

The white-robed cultivator next to him hurriedly rose to his feet as well. “I greet you, Immortal novice.”

The golden-robed novice glanced sideways at the white-robed cultivator, just nodding slightly at him, then said, “Uncle-master Seatopple, I have come per the orders of the Patriarch. The Patriarch wishes to see you.”

“Oh.” Upon seeing this, Seatopple immediately said, “Then I shall go right away.” Seatopple then immediately said to the white-robed

cultivator next to him, “Master is ordering me to go to him. I must...”

“Big brother, no worries; go take care of your matters first. I won’t stay here any longer; I’m going to pay the Deva Realm a visit and see if I can find anyone to help that poor child of mine,” the white-robed cultivator hurriedly said, then left gracefully.

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“Master!” The green-armored man called out with respect.

Above him was the black-haired elder, seated atop a cloud. He nodded lightly, then said with a smile, “Seatopple, there is something I am going to have you go do.”

“Master, please instruct me,” Seatopple said respectfully.

“A hundred years ago, I accepted a disciple in the world of the Grand Xia, one of the three thousand major worlds,” the black-haired elder said with a calm laugh. “In other words, a junior apprentice-brother for you.”

“A junior apprentice-brother?” Seatopple was amazed. A hundred years ago? When his master took on a disciple, it was a matter of tremendous importance. And yet, he had no idea of this whatsoever.

“His true name is Zhang Qi. He is learning the Dao in a small school known as the Black-White College within the world of the Grand Xia. He is currently just a Wanxiang Adept, and others refer to him as the Sloppy Daoist.” The black-haired elder said with a laugh, “The Grand Xia world has just held a Conclave of Immortal Destiny. Your junior apprentice-brother attended this Conclave, which has now concluded. Go to the imperial capital of the Grand Xia’s world and bring your junior apprentice-brother before me. Remember...on this trip, you absolutely cannot cause any trouble. All you need to do is bring your junior apprentice-brother back here.”

“Understood,” Seatopple said respectfully.

“Go then,” the black-haired elder nodded.

Seatopple immediately departed respectfully, and then he left this major

world to go to the world of the Grand Xia.

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The world of the Grand Xia Dynasty. The imperial capital. The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone were all standing there respectfully, awaiting the order of the Grand Xia Emperor.

“This Ji Ning truly is formidable.”

“He’s only trained for thirty or so years, and yet became number one in this Conclave. It seems he has an extremely good chance of becoming the Daofather’s disciple.”

“It’ll be soon. His Imperial Majesty is about to deliver the scryer recording of the duels to the Daofather.”

The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals were all chatting amongst themselves. The Conclave had come to an end, with Ji Ning number one, Adept Woodpass number two, and Adept Blackstone number three. However, right now what everyone was paying attention to was...who the Daofather would choose as a disciple! The ‘champion’ of the Conclave was nothing but a meaningless title; to become the disciple of the Daofather was what really matter and came with real benefits.

“The three of you.” The Grand Xia Emperor’s voice once more rang out. Ning and the other two immediately listened carefully.

“I have already recorded all three of the previous duels using the water-scrying technique. I am now going to go to my master’s place and offer them to Master for the viewing.” The Grand Xia Emperor’s voice once more rang out, and a second, white-robed Xia Emperor appeared by his side who looked identical to the main body of the Xia Emperor.

Swoosh! The white-robed Xia Emperor took a single step forward, entering the skies above them, then tearing open the void and departing from this major world.

Ning and the other two were incomparably nervous. The white-robed

Xia Emperor was clearly the clone or Primaltwin of the Xia Emperor. Clearly, he had gone to visit Daofather Crimsonbright. Now, they were going to wait for the Daofather's selection.

Who would be chosen?

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"My formations are even more formidable than my personal close combat strength. The Daofather will naturally have excellent judgment and will be able to see how special and blessed I am in formations." Adept Blackstone was ranked number three. He had very complicated feelings in his heart right now. "Given my talent in formations...the Daofather should choose me."

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"I became the champion. I did everything I could. Next, all I can do is wait for the Daofather's decision," Ning said to himself silently.

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"Let's see if this destiny is mine," Adept Woodpass silently mused to himself.

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The Grand Xia Emperor, seated up high, once more spoke out. "My Primaltwin has already headed towards Master's place, but it is hard to say when Master will meet me and when he will choose a disciple." The Grand Xia Emperor looked down at the three nervous individuals below him. Clearly, it was hard for Ning and the other two to feel at ease for even a second. "Since the three of you are the top three of this Conclave, you can go pick a divine ability of your choosing from the Grand Xia's treasury."

"King Qi," the Grand Xia Emperor spoke out.

"Your Imperial Majesty." King Qi immediately rose and acknowledged him.

"Lead these three to our Grand Xia treasury. Let them choose a divine

ability,” the Grand Xia Emperor said.

How could Ning and the other two be in a mood to choose a divine ability right now? In a normal situation, yes, they would be incomparably excited at this chance to choose a divine ability from the Grand Xia’s treasury. But they were waiting for Daofather Crimsonbright’s decision. Their hearts felt suspended, and they only had one thought in their minds...

Who will the Daofather choose...who will be the one to be chosen...?

Choose me, choose me, choose me...

“Go. After my Primaltwin returns, I will naturally notify you of Master’s final decision,” the Grand Xia Emperor said.

“Yes,” Ji Ning, Woodpass, and Blackstone both responded respectfully. Then they moved to follow King Qi through a side corridor leading away.

The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals in the main hall, as well as the eliminated Wanxiang Adept geniuses, all watched the three leave with envious eyes...

The Grand Xia Emperor had already informed them all that one would be chosen by the Daofather as a disciple, while the other two would be chosen by Pure Yang True Immortals as disciples. In other words, all three of them would see their statuses suddenly and dramatically change. How could the eliminated contestants not feel envious?

“Yu Wei, Sloppy, do you two think Ji Ning will be chosen by the Daofather as a disciple?” Yuchi Xiyue was both excited and nervous. He was her most important family member; naturally, she hoped that Ning could ascend to the heavens with a single step. That way, it would also be much easier for Ning to deal with the Youngflame clan in the future.

“He will. The Daofather definitely will.” Yu Wei was holding Yuchi Xiyue’s hands.

“Sloppy?” Yuchi Xiyue looked towards the Sloppy Daoist, who shook his head. “I don’t know the Daofather’s temperament. It’s hard to say. Still... since junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning has become number one in this

Conclave, and has trained for such a short period of time...he is indeed the most dazzling figure of the three. There is a very high chance that the Daofather will choose junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning. However...no one can be absolutely certain regarding this."

Those who cared deeply about something would often find their thoughts in a jumble because of it. Both Yu Wei and Yuchi Xiyue cared far too deeply about Ning.

"But even if he cannot take on Daofather Crimsonbright as his master, he'll be apprenticed to a Pure Yang True Immortals. There's no need to be too nervous," the Sloppy Daoist said with a sigh. "I wonder if I would have this same good fortune to become the disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal one day."

"Eldest apprentice-brother, you were also quite dazzling in this Conclave. You should be accepted by a Pure Yang True Immortal as well," Yu Wei said.

"It won't be as simple as that. Pure Yang True Immortals won't casually accept new disciples." Although the Sloppy Daoist did feel a hint of hope, he maintained a calm heart.

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Suddenly, a heroic but terrifying aura spread out from the main hall. At the same time, a voice rang out: "Xiamang, long time no see."

Whoosh! Nearly a thousand Celestial Immortals, along with the eliminated Wanxiang Adepts, all turned to stare towards the outside in astonishment. This aura was so powerful and the words were so grandiose that this was clearly an extraordinary person.

"Hahaha..." The Xia Emperor rose to his feet, and the other eight Pure Yang True Immortals rose to their feet as well.

From the outside, a tall, skinny man dressed in deep green armor strode in. He had a heroic aura of vigor that caused all the surrounding Celestial Immortals to feel stunned.

"That's Great Sage Who Topples the Seas."

“Empyrean God Seatopple!”

“Demon King Seatopple!” 1

The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals all cried out in their hearts.

The Xia Emperor was now on his feet. He said with a laugh, “Seatopple, it has indeed been a long time. The Three Realms are currently filled with the stories of your heroics.”

“Seatopple, have you come to receive your junior apprentice-brother?” Lu Dongbin said with a lazy grin.

“Right.” Seatopple had an incomparably dominating aura, and his deep green eyes swept the surrounding figures. He immediately called out, “Who here is known as Zhang Qi? Who here is known as the Sloppy Daoist?”

The sloppy-looking fatty seated behind King Qi trembled with shock. What the hell?

*

1. This figure is a figure from Journey to the West. Early in the story, Sun Wukong (aka ‘Monkey King’) swore brotherhood with six other powerful demons. The Handsome Monkey King, Sun Wukong, took on the title of ‘Great Sage Equal to Heaven’, while this demon, the Flood Dragon Demon King, took on the title of ‘Great Sage Who Topples the Seas.

Chapter 34: A Mighty Divine Ability

Seatopple was an extremely famous figure of the Three Realms. He was a Diremonster who had trained all the way to the Empyrean God level. Generally speaking, others would refer to him as 'Empyrean God' or 'Great Sage' when being respectful to him...but in reality, since Empyrean God Seatopple was something of an unruly, lawless individual who was also quite savage and tyrannical, others would often secretly refer to him as the 'Demon King'.

The sloppy, chubby youth had indeed been badly frightened. After all, Seatopple's savage aura...was utterly terrifying within the main hall of the Skylight Palace. Even the Celestial Immortals were shocked by it, to say nothing of the Wanxiang Adepts.

"I, I am..." The Sloppy Daoist rose to his feet.

"Oh?" Seatopple turned to look at him, then nodded in satisfaction as he revealed a smile. "You really are pretty sloppy-looking."

As he spoke, he walked over, then grabbed the Sloppy Daoist by the arm, pulling him over as he walked towards the Grand Xia Emperor. A new table had already been prepared, covered with Immortal nectar and fruit.

The Sloppy Daoist was slightly panicking now. Still...this Empyrean God, Seatopple, was far too powerful. After having his arm grabbed, the Sloppy Daoist was completely unable to resist.

"What in the world is going on? Why has this savage-looking man with a dark-green Flood Dragon armor sought me out upon entering the Skylight Palace? Even the Grand Xia Emperor is polite to him, but I have never met such a formidable figure before." The Sloppy Daoist was panicking, but could do nothing but just go with the flow.

At the same time...the Sloppy Daoist that the gazes of those nearly thousand Celestial Immortals who were looking at him were filled...with envy! In fact, some of these Celestial Immortals smiled in a friendly manner towards him.

“I was eliminated...but these Celestial Immortal Patriarchs are still this polite towards me? And they are envious of me?” The Sloppy Daoist’s mind began to be filled with many thoughts.

“Junior apprentice-brother, come and sit.” Seatopple first sat down, then pulled the Sloppy Daoist to sit next to him.

“Junior apprentice-brother?” The Sloppy Daoist was completely bewildered now.

“Seatopple, it seems your junior apprentice-brother doesn’t understand the situation yet,” the Xia Emperor laughed.

Seatopple turned his head to look at the rather confused Sloppy Daoist. He said in a very straight manner, “Junior apprentice-brother, Master ordered me to come to the Grand Xia world, one of the three thousand major worlds, in order to take you back!”

“Senior, are you...sure you aren’t mistaken?” The Sloppy Daoist was feeling rather unnerved. He had no idea who this person was.

“Little Sloppy,” Lu Dongbin laughed, “This person before you is a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu, Empyrean God Seatopple! He’s not just an Empyrean God; he’s also reached the Pure Yang True Immortal as a Ki Refiner as well. In the Three Realms...he is extremely well-known. Not too long ago, he actually wrecked the Celestial Court.”

“Empyrean God? Pure Yang True Immortal? Wrecked the Celestial Court?” The Sloppy Daoist stared at this savage-looking man, completely shocked.

“Hahaha...” Seatopple began to laugh loudly. Slapping the Sloppy Daoist on the shoulder, he said, “Junior apprentice-brother, I have come on Master’s orders to receive you. Master said that you took part in this Conclave, and said that you come from the Black-White College, that your name is Zhang Qi, the Sloppy Daoist. There shouldn’t be a second person in this entire Conclave who comes from the Black-White College and who is known as the Sloppy Daoist Zhang Qi, right?”

The Sloppy Daoist nodded. In this competition, the Black-White College

only sent a total of three participants. There was naturally only one called the Sloppy Daoist.

“Little Sloppy,” the Xia Emperor laughed as well, “Don’t question it. Earlier, the divine ability which you displayed is called the ‘Grand Black Tortoise’ divine ability. Did you know that?”

“I did.” The Sloppy Daoist nodded.

“The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability was created by Grand Emperor Xuanwu. Without his permission, there’s no way you could’ve learned this divine ability,” the Xia Emperor laughed. “Perhaps you don’t realize this, but Grand Emperor Xuanwu has long ago viewed you as his disciple. He is a major power of the Three Realms, on the same level as my own master. He is a Daofather! When you put your divine ability on display earlier during this Conclave, all of us already guessed that you are the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.”

The Sloppy Daoist began to think back to the strange encounter he had so long ago...

“So...he was Grand Emperor Xuanwu...” The Sloppy Daoist was stunned.

So...there had been no need at all for him to fight so crazily in order to become Daofather Crimsonbright’s disciple. He had long ago been chosen as a disciple by Grand Emperor Xuanwu. However...this Conclave had been extremely beneficial to him. His insights into the Dao, especially into the ‘wavefolding’ secret art, had reached a very high level.

“Junior apprentice-brother, you’ve learned the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability? Then there’s no mistake about it; without Master’s permission, there’s no way you could’ve learned this.” Seatopple knew quite well that someone who had been accepted by his master at the Wanxiang Adept level or perhaps even earlier was someone who his master clearly viewed with tremendous favor. Thus, it would be best if he made friends with this Sloppy Daoist.

Seatopple himself usually caused quite a bit of trouble. In the future, once this junior apprentice-brother became powerful, he’d be able to give Seatopple a hand.

As the saying went, every hero should have at least three helpers by his side. The more powerful figures by his side, the better. That would naturally give him more confidence in roaming the Three Realms!

“Greetings, senior apprentice-brother,” the Sloppy Daoist immediately said while saluting him.

“Hahaha, don’t be so courteous.” Seatopple was extremely happy. “A while ago, I wrecked the Celestial Court and was confined by Master to my quarters. It’s rare for me to be allowed out. And today, I’ve even run into Eastflower, this old fogey from the Northlands, and all of these others as well. I’m just going to drink some wine first; in a bit, I’ll take you back to meet Master.”

“I’ll listen to your arrangements, senior apprentice-brother.” The Sloppy Daoist naturally was willing to follow his lead.

Seatopple patted the Sloppy Daoist on the shoulder. “Junior apprentice-brother, you have quite a good temper.”

“Eastflower, this Grand Xia world is holding a Conclave...why have all of you come as well?” Seatopple’s gaze swept forward as he asked this question. He felt quite puzzled. Pure Yang True Immortals were considered experts of the Three Realms. For nine of them to be gathered in one place was indeed fairly rare.

“This Conclave is quite special. One of the top three of this Conclave shall be chosen by Daofather Crimsonbright as a disciple,” Lu Dongbin said with a laugh. “Including little Sloppy, this Conclave actually includes two Daofather disciples.”

“What? Daofather Crimsonbright is taking on a disciple?” Seatopple looked towards the Xia Emperor. “Who is he choosing? Let me take a look.”

“The top three of this Conclave consist of Ji Ning, Blackstone, and Woodpass,” the Xia Emperor said. “As for who Master shall choose...my Primaltwin is heading towards Master’s estate right now. After a little bit more time, I imagine we’ll know the results.”

Seatopple immediately nodded, his eyes gleaming. Daofather Crimsonbright was taking on a disciple? This was quite an interesting affair. He had been confined to his quarters for years now, and had been incredibly stifled.

“Come, let’s drink while chatting. Xiamang, you are of the imperial clan of the Primordial Era...you need to prepare more wine.” Seatopple immediately guzzled down all the wine on his table, causing the corners of the Xia Emperor’s eyes to begin twitching. The others were drinking in a fairly graceful way, but this Great Sage Who Topples the Seas was a Flood Dragon; it was a minor matter for him to swallow all the water of a river with a single gulp. In drinking Immortal wine, he was similarly savage beyond all compare.

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The imperial treasury of the Grand Xia was located on the sixth floor of the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

“This place holds the abridged versions of all of the books held by the Dao Repository of our imperial Xia clan,” King Qi said with a laugh as he pointed towards countless bookshelves that were filled with books. “You can choose a divine ability at will, or a secret art or technique. But only one!”

Ji Ning, Adept Blackstone, and Adept Woodpass all nodded.

Although their minds were still occupied with the matter of becoming Daofather Crimsonbright’s disciple, for now they put that matter aside. The three began to search through this Dao Repository.

Soon, they saw a black jade table that was the most eye-catching of all.

This enormous black jade table was filled with abridged versions of divine abilities! On another table, a white jade table, there were abridged versions of precious secret arts.

[Moving Mountains, Overturning Seas] [Qiankun Arrow] [Myriad Hibernating Venoms] [Formless Illusions]

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Ning and the other two hurriedly grabbed one divine ability book after another, flipping through them. These books all had had some prerequisites listed on the front; for example, some required a person to have reached a certain level in order to train in it. These requirements, however, were all meant for the clansmen of the imperial Xia clan. Ning and the other two could choose as they pleased.

They read for a long period of time.

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They flipped through all the secret arts as well. In the end, as if by tacit agreement, all three of them chose the same divine ability – [Torch Dragon’s Eye]!

“Are you certain you are going to choose the [Torch Dragon’s Eye]?” King Qi asked.

“Yes.” Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all nodded in unison.

“Fine.” King Qi revealed a smile. “Come with me, then.” King Qi was actually fairly happy that all three had chosen the [Torch Dragon’s Eye], because this technique was still fairly widespread amongst the various major powers of the Three Realms.

However, this [Torch Dragon’s Eye] really was the most powerful divine ability within the imperial treasury of the Grand Xia! Although this was only the first part to the whole technique...this was still a technique that ranked in the top hundred of the Three Realms.

Rumble...a stone door was pushed open. King Qi led Ji Ning and the others into the stone room. In the center of the stone room, there were bamboo books that was hovering in midair, emanating a dreamy light and covered with restrictive spells.

“This is the [Torch Dragon’s Eye].” King Qi pointed towards a bamboo book. “The restrictive spells covering them have been unsealed. The other ones remain sealed; there’s no way for you to touch them.”

“All you need to do is touch the bamboo with your hands. The large

amounts of information contained within the bamboo will instantly be transmitted into your soul,” King Qi said. “Fortunately, this is merely the first part of the [Torch Dragon’s Eye], and so it won’t take too much time to accept the transmission. For each person, it will at most take as much time as needed to brew a pot of tea.”

Ning understood. This divine ability was one of those that increased dramatically in difficulty at the higher levels. Most likely, the part meant for Empyrean Gods was thousands of times more difficult than the part meant for Void-level cultivators. In addition, the part meant for True Gods would be thousands of times more complex than the part meant for Empyrean Gods.

Ning had accepted the complete transmission of the [Starseizing Hand], which was why it had taken him months to do so.

“Ji Ning, you come first,” King Qi said. Ning nodded, stretching out his hand and pressing it against the hovering bamboo book.

As soon as he touched it!

Boom! Instantly, a large amount of information began pouring into his soul. Although the transmission wasn’t as efficient and fast as when he had received the [Starseizing Hand] transmission, Ning’s soul was far more powerful than it had been back then, and the speed at which he accepted the data was faster as well. In just a short while, the complete first part of the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] had been transmitted into Ning’s soul.

“So that’s how it is.” Ning was secretly startled and delighted. The [Torch Dragon’s Eye]...this was a divine ability developed by the Torch Dragon, one of the major powers of the Three Realms. This divine ability was extremely famous! The legends often mentioned abilities like the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] or [Houyi Shooting the Sun]. Now, upon seeing the real method to activate this technique and its real power, Ning was secretly startled as well.

The [Torch Dragon’s Eye], in short, relied on harvesting the light of the Nine Heavens and focusing it in the eye, and then cultivating a so-called

‘innate torch-light’.

“Although this is just the first part, which any Fiendgods up to the Void-level can train in...it’s enough. After all, beyond that is the tribulation that results in Empyrean Gods. Upon becoming an Empyrean God, I’d be someone on the level of the Xia Emperor. I can just rely on my own powers to search for the second part to the [Torch Dragon’s Eye].” Ning was extraordinarily excited.

Aside from the [Starseizing Hand]...he had finally acquired yet another truly powerful divine ability.

Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all meditated on the contents of the [Torch Dragon’s Eye]. Each of them felt delighted in their hearts; after all, this was a technique comparable to the [Grand Black Tortoise] technique. If it hadn’t been for the fact that the Torch Dragon had perished, how could they have had a chance to learn this?

“Alright,” King Qi suddenly said. Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all raised their heads to look at him.

“His Imperial Majesty has sent word to me that Daofather Crimsonbright has chosen a disciple. The three of you need to hurry back with me to meet his Imperial Majesty at the main hall,” King Qi said.

Chapter 35: Daofather's Disciple

Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all felt their hearts clench. The joy they felt upon acquiring the [Torch Dragon's Eye] instantly fled to the back of their minds. All three of them had the same question in their heart: "Who did the Daofather choose? Was it me?"

"Let's go," King Qi said.

"Right." Ning and the other two obediently followed behind him, but in their hearts, they felt their emotions surge like the waves of the ocean.

The main hall of the Skylight Palace. The Xia Emperor's face changed as he revealed a look of surprise.

"What is it, Xiamang?" Lu Dongbin, Seatopple, and the rest of the nine all looked towards the Xia Emperor.

"Xiamang, can it be that the Daofather has already chosen a disciple?" Lu Dongbin chortled as he spoke. These Pure Yang True Immortals were all clever fellows; a simple change in expression by the Xia Emperor instantly drew their attention and caused them to be able to guess at what had happened. After all, given the Xia Emperor's status, why would he suddenly appear surprised for no reason at all?

"Hahaha..." The Xia Emperor laughed and nodded. "I really can't hide anything from you all. Indeed, my Primaltwin has visited Master, and Master just made his choice."

"Who?"

"Who did the Daofather choose?"

These Pure Yang True Immortals from the Celestial Court, the Buddhist Sangha, and the Daoist Path were all filled with curiosity as they asked the Xia Emperor.

"No rush, no rush. I've already sent for King Qi to bring those three little fellows back," the Xia Emperor laughed. "After those three little fellows return, I'll make the announcement."

“Show-off!” Seatopple pursed his lips, then glanced at the Sloppy Daoist. “Junior apprentice-brother, this Conclave you participated in the world of the Grand Xia really is quite special. You are a disciple of Master, while Daofather Crimsonbright is going to accept a disciple as well...the news that there were two disciples of a Daofather in a single Conclave is most likely going to soon spread throughout the Three Realms.”

The Sloppy Daoist just smiled. In front of these True Immortals and Empyrean Gods, he rarely said anything.

“Who will the Daofather choose?” The Sloppy Daoist felt puzzlement in his heart as well. “Will it be junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning?” In his heart, he hoped that his own junior apprentice-brother would be the one to be apprenticed to the Daofather. If that were to happen, then things really would be perfect for the Black-White College this time.

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Moments later. King Qi led Ning and the other two back into the main hall. Instantly, the gazes of the nearly thousand Celestial Immortals present swung towards them.

“Why have the three of them returned?”

“Can it be that the Daofather has already made his choice?”

The Celestial Immortals instantly guessed at the reason, and they all felt nervousness in their hearts.

“Your Imperial Majesty, the three have come,” King Qi said respectfully. Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone stood obediently behind him.

“Mm.” The Xia Emperor nodded slightly.

King Qi retreated to one side, sitting down in the lotus position in the seat he had been in previously. Ning and the other two were now the focal point for the entire main hall of the Skylight Palace. They found it difficult to hide the restlessness and nervousness in their eyes. Although all three of them were monstrous geniuses, they were still extremely nervous right now!

The Xia Emperor, seated above them atop his throne, revealed a rare smile. He said in a clear voice: "Master has already chosen a disciple amongst you three. The disciple shall be..."

When these words came out, everyone held their breaths.

"Gotta be Ji Ning. Gotta be Ji Ning." Yuchi Xiyue was tightly clenching Yu Wei's hands.

"Ji Ning. Ji Ning."

Ninelotus raised her head to watch as well.

"Don't let it be Ji Ning. Don't let it be him!" Patriarch Arcanum's narrow eyes were filled with frantic worry. If Ji Ning became the Daofather's disciple, then in the future, he would most likely prove to become a true disaster for the Youngflame clan!

Many people were waiting silently. Some hoped it would be Ning; others hoped it would be Adept Woodpass; still others hoped it would be Adept Blackstone. They each had their own supporters and detractors.

For the world of the Grand Xia to give birth to a new disciple of a Daofather was something that would completely, fundamentally change the balance of power in the entire Grand Xia Dynasty.

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The Xia Emperor's gaze swept downwards, pausing to intentionally prolong the tension. Only upon seeing Seatopple glare angrily at him and Lu Dongbin rub his nose did the Xia Emperor declare, "The Daofather's chosen disciple is...Adept Woodpass!"

"Adept Woodpass!"

The Xia Emperor's voice echoed within the entire main hall. For a moment, the entire main hall was completely silent.

"Adept Woodpass!"

"The Daofather's disciple...Adept Woodpass!"

"Adept Woodpass!"

In perfect unison, all of the Celestial Immortals and eliminated Wanxiang Adepts within the main hall all turned their gazes towards the simple, honest-looking youth, Adept Woodpass. For a time, all of the Celestial Immortals found it difficult to mask the envy and desire they felt. They knew very well that this honest-looking youth's status had just soared into the heavens!

The Daofather's disciple! Adept Woodpass!

In this instant, Adept Woodpass had become the most dazzling figure in the entire Skylight Palace!

"It was actually Adept Woodpass!" Yuchi Xiyue, Yu Wei, the Sloppy Daoist, and some others all turned to look at Ji Ning. They felt unhappy on Ning's behalf.

Ning had already tried his best. He was the youngest of the three, and was number one in this Conclave. Why hadn't he been chosen?

However, they didn't argue against this decision, because the decision was Daofather Crimsonbright's! Only the person who the Daofather took a favoring to would be chosen...and that person didn't necessarily have to be number one.

"The Daofather's chosen disciple is...Adept Woodpass!" The voice rang out in Ning's ears. He felt dazed.

For an extremely brief moment, Ning's entire mind went blank. However, he quickly came back to consciousness. Although he was clear-headed now, in his heart, he still felt countless emotions.

"Why would it be him? Why did the Daofather choose him?" Ning's heart was filled with urgency, resentment, rage...and helplessness!

He was helpless. Truly helpless. The choice of a disciple was up to the Daofather; no matter how dazzling Ning had proven himself to be, if the Daofather didn't like him, it was all for nothing.

"If I had completely exposed my [Starseizing Hand], then perhaps Daofather Crimsonbright would have chosen me." This thought suddenly came to Ning's mind...but it was nothing more than a disgruntled

thought. Ning knew very well that given how many people were watching this Conclave, as soon as his [Starseizing Hand] was revealed, the after-effects would be completely unpredictable!

The Three Realms were currently filled with turbulent undercurrents that were simply too mysterious. Daoist Threelives' status was unknown. Ning didn't dare take this risk.

"Congratulations, brother Woodpass." Ning immediately turned to the nearby Adept Woodpass, expressing his congratulations.

On his other side was Adept Blackstone, who had an extremely complicated look in his eyes. Upon hearing Ning's words, he immediately came to his own senses. In his heart, he secretly felt ashamed; in the face of this mental blow, he had actually taken longer to recover than Ji Ning, who had trained for just thirty or so years. But no matter what...he hadn't been chosen. It was guaranteed that two of them would be eliminated.

"Congratulations, brother Woodpass," Adept Blackstone said as well.

Adept Woodpass's eyes were filled with joy. He immediately said, "Brother Ji Ning, brother Blackstone, I was just lucky. Neither of you are inferior to me."

The Xia Emperor, seated on his throne, nodded slightly upon seeing this.

Ji Ning and Blackstone's Dao-hearts were fairly formidable. The chance of becoming the Daofather's disciple had suddenly disappeared; this was a tremendous blow that would cause some people's Dao-hearts to completely crumble, and perhaps even cause them to go insane. For Ji Ning and Adept Blackstone to be able to quickly recover from this blow and regain their faculties...they did indeed live up to being top of the top three contestants in this Conclave.

"Ji Ning, Blackstone," the Xia Emperor said. "The two of you don't need to be depressed. I told you that the two of you will both be able to apprentice yourselves to a Pure Yang True Immortal! I will help you select a suitable master...and if others do not take you in, then I, Xiamang Xun, will personally take you on as my disciples. However, I do not travel on the Dao of the Sword, nor do I travel on the Dao of Formations. I'm not

necessarily the best suited master for you two. Go and spend three days in the imperial capital first. Within three days, I'll send someone to meet you two."

"Thank you, your Imperial Majesty." Ning and Adept Blackstone both responded respectfully.

"The two of you can leave now," the Xia Emperor said. He was quite favorably disposed towards both Ji Ning and Adept Blackstone. The attack on the Six Paths of Reincarnation and its collapse...the fact that this Conclave gave birth to two Daofather's disciples...the Xia Emperor felt increasingly certain that this Conclave was going to give birth to future heroes of the Three Realms. Ji Ning and Adept Blackstone both had this potential!

"Junior apprentice-brother Woodpass, go ahead and seat yourself next to junior apprentice-brother Sovereign Hao," the Xia Emperor said.

Adept Woodpass couldn't breath. 'Junior apprentice-brother'? The Xia Emperor had just referred to him as junior apprentice-brother? Adept Woodpass now truly understood...that from today onwards, his destiny had indeed been completely changed. He truly was about to soar into the heavens.

"Yes." Adept Woodpass obediently walked forward. Sovereign Hao grabbed him and pulled him over to sit next to him.

"Eh?" Only now did Adept Woodpass see Empyrean God Seatopple, as well as the Sloppy Daoist who was beside him. "Why is the Sloppy Daoist sitting here as well?"

This place was a place where the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods were seated; not even the Celestial Immortals were permitted to come close. Why was the Sloppy Daoist here? And who was this man dressed in deep green Flood Dragon armor?

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Ning was seated back before King Yan once more. King Yan consoled him, "Ji Ning, don't feel dispirited. After all, you shall still become the

disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal. Even if there are no suitable ones...you will at least become his Imperial Majesty's personal disciple. For him to become your master means that in the future, you will have no troubles at all within the world of the Grand Xia Dynasty. You will no longer need to fear the Youngflame clan."

Ning nodded lightly. Since he couldn't become the Daofather's disciple, then all he could do was lower his expectations for now. Pure Yang True Immortals were truly formidable figures of the Three Realms as well. Perhaps they might know about whether Daoist Threelives was alive or not. In addition, with a Pure Yang True Immortal as his master, he would have a powerful backer in the future!

"Ji Ning." Yuchi Xiyue looked towards Ning with concern.

"Ji Ning." Yu Wei looked towards him as well.

Both of them were worried about him.

Ning, after sitting down, smiled gently. "There's no way I can change the Daofather's decision on whether or not to choose me! No matter what, I've already done all I can."

"Right." Both Yu Wei and Xiyue let out sighs of relief. Ning's Dao-heart was even more firm and strong than they had expected.

Ning then looked towards the place where the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods were gathered. He immediately whispered, "Why is eldest apprentice-brother seated over there? Who is that fellow dressed in the dark green Flood Dragon armor in front of him?"

Yu Wei and Xiyue exchanged a glance. Xiyue spoke out, "When you went to choose a divine ability, that Empyrean God known as Seatopple arrived. He is the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu, and he has come to this Conclave for the express purpose of bringing back the Sloppy Daoist."

"He's taking him away?" Ning was puzzled.

Yu Wei said, "You didn't see it, Ji Ning. Everyone in the main hall was talking about it earlier. The divine ability which eldest apprentice-brother

uses is known as the 'Grand Black Tortoise' divine ability, which was created by Grand Emperor Xuanwu, one of the major powers of the Three Realms. In reality...he had been chosen by Grand Emperor Xuanwu long ago to be his disciple. After this Conclave, he is going to be taken before Grand Emperor Xuanwu and truly taught the Dao."

"What?!" Ning was stunned. Woodpass was a major power's disciple, and now the Sloppy Daoist was becoming one as well?

Chapter 36: Lu Dongbin Accepts a Disciple

Ji Ning, Adept Blackstone, and Adept Woodpass quickly came to understand the situation. It wasn't so bad for Adept Woodpass, but Ji Ning and Adept Blackstone found it hard to refrain from feeling envy.

Becoming a Daofather's disciple! Aside from personal effort, luck was another part of it!

"Xiamang," Seatopple said, puzzled. "I heard you say earlier that it seems as though of the three, Ji Ning is the youngest. In addition, he also became number one in this Conclave. In turn, Blackstone is a grandmaster in formations. Why would the Daofather end up choosing Adept Woodpass?"

"How should I know?" The Xia Emperor shook his head. However, in his heart, the Xia Emperor thought back to his Primaltwin's visit with Daofather Crimsonbright.

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Beyond the Three Realms, within the infinite void. There was a mountain that was hovering within the void. The mountain was a million kilometers in size, and it was filled with palaces. This was the place where Daofather Crimsonbright, a major power of the Three Realms, resided.

"Master, here are the recordings of the top three youths who participated in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny." The white-robed Xia Emperor stood there respectfully while handing over a scroll.

Off in the distance, there was an elder with long azure hair seated in the lotus position atop a stone. The void around the place where he was seated seemed to be incomparably stable and steady.

The azure-haired elder nodded gently. The scroll instantly unfurled, its surface flashing through the images of those three duels.

Whoosh...the scene of the first battle suddenly turned dramatic and exciting. Instantly, the battle between Ji Ning and Adept Blackstone began to proceed.

“Mm.” The azure-haired elder revealed a hint of a smile as he nodded lightly. “This young fellow who uses formations truly is quite remarkable in this respect. If he were to focus on it, in the future, he would most likely become a true grandmaster of the Dao of Formations! By relying on the Dao of Formations, he has a chance of overcome the Celestial Tribulation and becoming a Celestial Immortal. He is worth nurturing!”

“The young fellow who uses the sword isn’t bad either. His sword-intent is quite formidable; he should be an excellent potential Sword Immortal,” the azure-haired elder said in praise.

The white-robed Xia Emperor said respectfully, “Master, of the final three in this Conclave, the number one victor is the sword-wielding one. His name is Ji Ning, and he has only trained for thirty years. This formations wielder is known as Blackstone; he ranked number three, and has spent a hundred years in his training. As for the last one, his name was Adept Woodpass. He ranked number two in this Conclave, and has trained for more than three hundred years!”

“Thirty years?” Daofather Crimsonbright was surprised. He nodded lightly, a look of delight appearing in his eyes. “It seems his talent in the Dao of the Sword is quite astonishing. He’s worth nurturing as well.”

The white-robed Xia Emperor nodded lightly as well. That went without saying. Even Lu Dongbin had grown intrigued, and he was someone who was quite skilled at guiding disciples, and who had exceptional judgment. He had taken a liking to Ji Ning...and had long ago praised him as being a genius in the Dao of the Sword.

Whoosh. Daofather Crimsonbright flicked through to the second battle. This was between Adept Woodpass and Adept Blackstone.

Upon seeing seeing this battle, Daofather Crimsonbright’s eyes lit up. He immediately flicked through to the third battle, the one between Ji Ning and Adept Woodpass.

“Good, good, good.” Daofather Crimsonbright said the word ‘good’ three times in a row.

The white-robed Xia Emperor was immediately surprised and perplexed. Who was Daofather Crimsonbright praising? Was it Ji Ning?

“Master, there was someone else in this Conclave known as the Sloppy Daoist. He is the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu, and has trained for a hundred years. The Sloppy Daoist was actually himself kept in the dark, and had no idea that he was the Grand Emperor’s disciple. In the end, Seatopple personally came to receive him back to meet with Grand Emperor Xuanwu,” the white-robed Xia Emperor added.

“The Turtle-Snake’s disciple?” Daofather Crimsonbright was curious. “Do you have a scryer recording?”

“I do.” Since the white-robed Xia Emperor had mentioned the Sloppy Daoist, he naturally had come prepared. He immediately offered yet another scroll, this one with multiple battles recorded, including that between Adept Woodpass and the Sloppy Daoist, where the Sloppy Daoist had been defeated in the end.

After viewing that battle, Daofather Crimsonbright couldn’t help but laugh. “Hahaha, that old Turtle-Snake’s temperament is very similar to mine, and his judgment is the same. This Sloppy Daoist that he chose...he is quite low-key and quite reliable, with a solid, deep foundation that has no flaws. Although in his youth he may have seemed to be slow in training, as time passes...his deep, solid foundation will allow his Immortal path to be a long and stable one.”

“Woodpass and this Sloppy have almost identical Immortal cultivation paths,” Daofather Crimsonbright nodded with a sigh. “Both have incomparably perfect and stable foundations, and both have extremely strong Dao-hearts.”

The white-robed Xia Emperor was startled. Judging from these words...it seemed as though his master favored Adept Woodpass.

“Daofather, can it be that you are going to choose Adept Woodpass?” The white-robed Xia Emperor couldn’t help but speak out. He had spent

the most time training out of the top three.

“Remember,” Daofather Crimsonbright said with a calm laugh, “Don’t just judge a person just by his temporary prominence. The path of Immortal cultivation is an incomparably long and limitless one...and these three have just embarked on it a short while ago. In choosing a disciple, one must see through the present and into the infinite future.”

“Thirty years? A hundred years? Three hundred years? In the fact of the long Immortal path, these timeframes are nothing,” Daofather Crimsonbright said. “The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpath are both unrushed and stable, with calm, leisurely dispositions! Just by looking at their combat styles, I can tell that they didn’t waste any of their attention on small tricks and benefits.”

The white-robed Xia Emperor nodded. Indeed, the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass were quite similar.

“This sort of temperament is the best sort of mentality and heart for an Immortal cultivator,” Daofather Crimsonbright said with a laugh. “Or at least, it’s the sort that I and the old Turtle-Snake favor.”

Daofather Crimsonbright was an extremely good-natured person; everyone knew this. As the saying goes, when a turtle sees a pea, he would like it for its color! Daofather Crimsonbright favored Woodpass for his heart and mind. He knew very well that although the Immortal path required a certain degree of comprehension ability and talent, towards the later parts of the path, it required even more regarding one’s mind and Dao-heart!

“It’ll be Woodpass,” Daofather Crimsonbright nodded. “As for the other two, they are moldable talents as well. Go and seek out your fellow disciples and see which of them are willing to accept these two as disciples. The Three Realms are in a state of upheaval; perhaps my gaze has gone astray and either Ji Ning or Adept Blackstone shall become formidable in the future as well. Thus, we should still bring them into my Crimsonbright League!”

“Yes,” the white-robed Xia Emperor nodded. “Ji Ning is a Sword

Immortal. I shall go seek out junior apprentice-brother Evergreen! Junior apprentice-brother Evergreen is a Sword Immortal as well. As for this Blackstone...it seems as though none of us are truly peerless with regards to the Dao of Formations.”

“If you can’t find anyone suitable, then you can accept this Blackstone yourself. Although your talent in formations isn’t amongst the top within the Three Realms, it is more than enough to teach this Blackstone,” Daofather Crimsonbright said.

The white-robed Xia Emperor nodded in acknowledgment.

Back within the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

Amongst the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods, Lu Dongbin was the strongest. He was ranked at the very top amongst the Pure Yang True Immortals of the Three Realms, and was a peerless Sword Immortal who had an extremely good chance of becoming a Daofather of the Great Firmament.

As for the Daofathers supporting him...they were Lieges of the Daoist Path.

He was viewed with great favor by those two Daofathers, and had even produced a disciple who became a Pure Yang True Immortal. Lu Dongbin’s vision was particularly astute! Long before the others had realized how special Ji Ning was, Lu Dongbin had been able to somewhat sense it.

“Xiamang,” Lu Dongbin said with a laugh, “Since Daofather Crimsonbright has not accepted Ji Ning as his disciple, then I’ll shamelessly raise this topic again; Ji Ning truly has exceptional potential as a Sword Immortal, and I like him very much. I wonder, Xiamang, if you would be willing to give me some face and let me take Ji Ning. I truly do want to take on this disciple.”

“Lu Dongbin...” The Xia Emperor shook his head. “Although Master didn’t choose Ji Ning, he still praised him multiple times. So...please don’t make things hard for me, Lu Dongbin.”

“Xiamang, it is just a Wanxiang Adept.” Empyrean God Seatopple pursed his lips. “Since Eastflower has asked this of you...can it be that Eastflower’s face is worth less than a young Wanxiang Adept? In addition, your Crimsonbright League only has a single Pure Yang Sword Immortal, Immortal Evergreen, right? Immortal Evergreen isn’t a good teacher; it’s been so many years, but I’ve never heard of him producing a single Celestial Immortal.”

The corners of the Xia Emperor’s eyes twitched.

“Since Eastflower has made the request, just give him some face, Xiamang,” the Immortal Elder of the Northlands spoke out as well.

At the beginning, Lu Dongbin had mentioned this in a joking way, but had been refused. But this time...he was being extremely serious.

Lu Dongbin had many good friends. He was very influential, and his backers were very powerful. All of the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods present aside from Sovereign Hao, who was also Daofather Crimsonbright’s disciple, were speaking out on his behalf.

“Xiamang, you know what sort of a temperament I have. I’ve always been a blunt, straight-talker. I truly am intrigued by this Ji Ning, and I want to take him on as my disciple. Xiamang, help me out here. I’ll owe you a favor and I won’t forget it. What do you say?” Lu Dongbin spoke out earnestly.

The Xia Emperor was startled. A favor from Lu Dongbin? That was quite valuable indeed.

But...Daofather’s Crimsonbright’s words remained within his mind. Although the Daofather hadn’t chosen Ji Ning and Blackstone, he still had a very good impression of them. He had said that perhaps Ji Ning and Blackstone would also be quite astonishing in the future...and that they had to be brought into the Crimsonbright League.

“Lu Dongbin, it’s not that I won’t allow it, it is that Master has given his orders.” The Xia Emperor shook his head. “There’s nothing I can do.”

Lu Dongbin frowned.

The Xia Emperor could tell that Lu Dongbin was unhappy...but there was nothing he could do about it. He had to make this refusal.

Lu Dongbin shook his head and sighed. It seemed as though he truly was not destined to become Ji Ning's master! He didn't dare to actually kidnap and forcibly take away Ji Ning...after all, that would be the equivalent of slapping Daofather Crimsonbright directly in the face! A Daofather who had emerged from the primordial chaos and had survived into the present era...he absolutely would not offend such a person for no good reason.

"Then Ji Ning's Dao-companion, Yu Wei. I rather like this little lady as well. If I take her as my disciple, you won't stop me, will you Xiamang?" Lu Dongbin said.

"Haha, that's a small matter. Lu Dongbin, you can pick anyone you want from outside the top ninety-six. Even if you choose them all, it'd be fine." The Xia Emperor spoke out in a very magnanimous way. He knew that he had caused Lu Dongbin to feel unhappy, and so he naturally now spoke out in a way to make him feel better.

Lu Dongbin nodded, then turned his gaze towards King Yan's side, towards Yu Wei. She was currently holding hands with Ji Ning and whispering with him.

"Little girl, come over here," Lu Dongbin smiled towards Yu Wei. His voice rang out directly within her ears.

"Eh?" Yu Wei was startled. Raising her head to look over, she immediately saw that the Xia Emperor and the others were all looking towards her.

"Yu Wei, come here," the Xia Emperor said as well.

Only now did Yu Wei, rather puzzled and lost, rise to her feet. She began to walk towards them...and in doing so, caused quite a few of the Celestial Immortals and Wanxiang Adepts present to pay attention to her.

"Little girl," Lu Dongbin said with a laugh as he looked at Yu Wei, "I, Lu Dongbin, wish to take you on as a disciple. Are you willing?"

Chapter 37: Sword Immortal Evergreen

Lu Dongbin didn't mask his voice at all. It echoed throughout the entire main hall of the Skylight Palace, and all of the nearly thousand Celestial Immortals as well as the various Wanxiang Adepts were all incomparably surprised.

"Exalted Immortal Eastflower is taking on that little girl of the Black-White College?"

"Why is Lu Dongbin taking on this little girl?"

"Lu Dongbin's judgment is exceptional. Even I would like to take him on as a master, but he wouldn't even look at me! But why is it that today..."

Many of the Celestial Immortals present were rather jealous. Becoming the disciple of a Daofather was a stroke of tremendous karmic fortune! They didn't even dare to dream of such a thing, and so most of them actually hoped for becoming a disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal.

Lu Dongbin was one of the very top True Immortals or Empyrean Gods, and his background was incredible as well. He was also superb at teaching his students! He was a passionate man, and whenever he took on a disciple, he would use all his heart in training them. Compared to him, many of the other True Immortals or Empyrean Gods were focusing on training in the Dao, and didn't care as much about their disciples.

"Lu Dongbin?"

"The legendary Lu Dongbin?" The Wanxiang Adepts, such as Adept Ninedeaths, Cangwu Jiu, Xiangtian Xiao, Youngflame Zhan, and the others all turned red-eyed with jealousy. They had fought into the top ninety-six, and some had even fought into the top twelve or top six!

Lu Dongbin's fame was such that even many ordinary mortals and commoners had heard of it. This was because figures such as Houyi, Father Kua, and the Eight Immortals of the High Caves were simply too famous and too well-known in the legends. As for Lu Dongbin...he was the leader of the Eight Immortals of the High Caves!

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Although they were red-eyed with jealousy, the Celestial Immortals all knew that this was the type of person Lu Dongbin was.

“Are you willing?” Lu Dongbin asked once again.

Yu Wei was stunned. This sudden, unexpected surprise had made her somewhat speechless. Of course she was willing! Who wouldn’t be willing to be an apprentice to Lu Dongbin? This was something that was second to only becoming a Daofather’s disciple!

But she had just become Dao-companions with Ji Ning...were they going to be separated just like this?

Yu Wei turned her head to look towards the distant Ning. Ning understood what she was feeling. Although he couldn’t bear to let her go, he knew that Yu Wei was also a person whose heart was focused on the Dao. He nodded gently.

“Don’t feel too much regret for your little lover.” Lu Dongbin saw Yu Wei turn her head towards Ji Ning. He explained, “Your little lover is definitely going to become an apprentice to a True Immortal or Empyrean God as well; he’s definitely going to spend some time by their side. And so, regardless of whether or not you accept me as your master, in a short period of time, Ji Ning himself will depart from the world of the Grand Xia.”

Yu Wei now understood. She gave the distant Ning another glance. Ning himself repeatedly gestured with his eyes at her while nodding.

“Can I ask how long it will be?” Yu Wei asked nervously.

“At least a few decades, at most a century,” Lu Dongbin said with a laugh. “Don’t worry; once I hear that Ji Ning has returned to the world of the Grand Xia, I will soon let you come back and reunite with your little lover.”

Yu Wei said with desire, “Then can Ji Ning take you on as his master as well?” She knew that Lu Dongbin was a Sword Immortal; he was quite suited to teach Ning.

“I want that too,” Lu Dongbin said, shaking his head and sighing. “But unfortunately, this Grand Xia Emperor of yours won’t allow it no matter what.” As he spoke, he gave the Xia Emperor a glance.

The Xia Emperor just sat there smiling, not saying a single word. Clearly...there was no room for discussion on this at all!

Yu Wei nodded. She no longer hesitated at all. Falling to her knees, she called out respectfully, “Your disciple greets you, Master.”

“Hahaha...” Lu Dongbin began to laugh loudly. “Good, good, good. To be able to take on a good disciple such as you...this trip of mine to this Conclave was worth it. Yu Wei, go spend some more time with your little lover; in a short while, when the Conclave concludes, we shall leave this world of the Grand Xia.”

“Yes, Master.” Yu Wei once more headed right back to Ning’s side.

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“Yu Wei, congratulations.” Yuchi Xiyue was very happy for Yu Wei. Her cousin’s Dao-companion had become Lu Dongbin’s apprentice; this was a joyous matter indeed.

“Ji Ning, after this Conclave concludes, the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods will leave. Master will take me away from this world of the Grand Xia as well.” Yu Wei had a look of longing in her eyes.

Ning gently took Yu Wei’s hand in his own. “Both of our hearts are focused on the Dao. An opportunity like this is rare; how can we let it pass by? In addition, I’m going to be apprenticed to a True Immortal or Empyrean God as well. By then, I’ll be stayed permanently by Master’s side...and I too shall leave this world of the Grand Xia.”

Although he wasn’t going to be able to become a Daofather’s apprentice...by becoming a True Immortal or Empyrean God’s apprentice, he would still have a powerful backer! He would also learn more about the various powers within the Three Realms! Ning had already decided to spend some time alongside the True Immortal or Empyrean God and focus on training with him or her.

Yu Wei nodded. "Master said the same thing. He will probably take me away for a few decades, no more than a century. Once you come back, Ji Ning...Master will know and will quickly release me as well."

"We'll both work hard," Ning said softly. "We are both going to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become Celestial Immortals. We truly be together for eternity."

"Together for eternity." Yu Wei nodded as well, her eyes slightly red. To be by the side of her lover for all eternity...how beautiful that would be.

"But can I truly be together for eternity with Ji Ning?" Yu Wei once more thought back to her past life, and her heart began to be filled with a surge of terror. "...no matter what, I will rather let my soul be destroyed than harm Ji Ning in the slightest. At least before I die...everything will be perfect."

Within one of the trillion minor worlds of the Three Realms.

This was a beautiful world with fragrant flowers and chirping birds. The people were simple folk. Although the world was separated into three nations, they usually just engaged in shouting matches against each other. Occasionally, some Immortal cultivators would compete against each other in order to win some advantages for their respective nations, but actual large-scale wars were very rare.

Whoosh. A tear in space appeared.

The white-robed Xia Emperor strode out from the void. Upon arriving within this minor world, he soon headed towards a mountain. Atop the mountain, there was a Daoist monastery, known as the Evergreen Monastery. Evergreen Monastery was extremely ordinary, and in this minor world very few knew of it. It was only known in the nearby counties and towns.

How could the people of this minor world have any idea that within this Evergreen Monastery, there was a truly exalted and peerless Sword Immortal.

"Junior apprentice-brother Evergreen, so all you do is train in the Dao

alongside your four or five novices within this crappy monastery?" The white-robed Xia Emperor went to the back of the monastery, where several farm plots were located. A young man was next to a pool of water.

"You can manage your major world. As for myself, I have nothing holding me back. Why should I trouble myself with various things?" The young man said calmly.

"What about your disciples?" The white-robed Xia Emperor shook his head. "If you are going to stay in this monastery, why don't you bring those disciples of yours over and give them some good tutelage."

"Teachers can show you the way, but cultivation relies on one's own abilities. I guided them for ten years and taught everything which I should've taught. It is enough. As for what they will end up like, and as for whether or not they will become Celestial Immortals...there's nothing more I can do." The young man sat down casually, scooping up a ladle of water from the water bucket in front of him and drinking it. He sighed to himself, "Such sweet water."

The white-robed Xia Emperor felt resigned. Anyone capable of becoming a True Immortal or an Empyrean God was an expert of the Three Realms; even the Celestial Court would have to treat them with courtesy. Every person had a different personality. He was unable to persuade this junior apprentice-brother of his.

"I've come on Master's orders," the white-robed Xia Emperor said.

"Master?" The young man immediately became serious.

The white-robed Xia Emperor said. "You know that three or so decades ago, the Six Realms of Reincarnation suffered an attack and collapsed. The Three Realms are filled with hidden, dangerous undercurrents. A major storm is most likely coming, and it is unavoidable. And...the more chaotic an era, the more heroes will emerge from it into the Three Realms."

The young man nodded.

"My Grand Xia world is blessed by karmic luck. During this Conclave of

Immortal Destiny, even Master choose one of the top three to be his disciple, a man named Adept Woodpass. Even a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu appeared in this Conclave,” the white-robed Xia Emperor said.

“Oh?” The white-robed man said in surprise, “One Conclave, two Daofather disciples?”

“According to Master’s instructions, all three of the top three in this Conclave are to be brought into our Crimsonbright League. Master himself chose Adept Woodpass, while the other two are known as Adept Blackstone and Ji Ning. Ji Ning is a potential peerless Sword Immortal; he’s only trained for thirty years, and even Lu Dongbin wanted to take him as a disciple. I didn’t let that happen, though. In addition...he was born shortly after the Six Paths of Reincarnation were destroyed. Perhaps he truly is blessed by tremendous luck,” the white-robed Xia Emperor said in a persuasive manner.

“No need to try and sway me.” The young man shook his head. “Whether or not Lu Dongbin takes on a disciple has nothing to do with me. That personality of his...he can even take on ordinary mortals as disciples. As for the fact that this Ji Ning has trained for just thirty years, and was born shortly after the collapse of the Six Paths of Reincarnation...that’s an utter joke!”

“The reason why heroes emerge from periods of chaos in the Three Realms is because those periods are periods of constant battle. Many experts will die, and their luck will dissipate from them and gather around others...” The young man continued, “With each storm in the Three Realms, old experts fall and new experts rise. Even some Daofathers fall, while new Daofathers emerge. The total number of experts in the Three Realms has remained constant.”

“Whether or not one will become an expert depends entirely on whether or not one can seize the right opportunity during periods of chaos in the Three Realms!”

“As for the time of their birth? Hmph, try that line on someone else.”

The young man wasn't swayed in the slightest.

The white-robed Xia Emperor could only laugh.

Even Daofathers could re-establish the cycle of reincarnation! Everyone knew what the secrets of reincarnation were. A person's destiny, however, wasn't determined by their birth; what mattered was what happened to them after it! Nobody was guaranteed to be a Daofather upon birth! There was no such thing. At most, one might be born into a good family, thanks to good karma stored up from a past life.

"And, senior apprentice-brother...it's not that I want to criticize you," the young man said, "But so what if a storm is coming to the Three Realms? Whether or not one takes on a disciple doesn't matter at all. What matters is one's personal power!"

"The only ones we can trust, that we can control, are ourselves!"

"Disciples can turn traitor. Subordinates can turn traitor. Even friends can stab you in the back...only by increasing your own power can you fundamentally grow strong," the young man said. "As far as I am concerned, this period of chaos in the Three Realms is a chance for me, Evergreen, to break through to become a Daofather of the Great Firmament. As for taking on disciples? Even if my disciple trained to become a Daofather, it wouldn't mean a damn thing for me!"

The white-robed Xia Emperor no longer said anything. He and Sword Immortal Evergreen were on two completely different paths; he himself was born from the lineage of the imperial clan of the Primordial Era, and so his way of thinking was naturally different. He immediately took out a scroll. "Take a look. These are the scenes of Ji Ning's duels."

The scroll unfurled. One scene of battle appeared after another.

"A Sword Immortal?" The young man nodded. He gave the white-robed Xia Emperor a small azure sword. "This kid truly is quite talented. Since Master has ordered it, then I shall take on this Ji Ning as my apprentice. This is my talisman; arrange for someone to give it to him. If he is willing to take me on as Master, then let him crush it within ten days, and I will go find him. After ten days, the talisman will automatically dissipate."

Even if a master was willing to accept an apprentice, the apprentice also had to be willing to take on this master.

Lu Dongbin had needed to ask Yu Wei for her agreement. The same was true for Sword Immortal Evergreen. If Ji Ning wasn't willing...then given his arrogance as a Pure Yang True Immortal, he naturally wouldn't run over to beg Ning to accept him.

"Alright." The white-robed Xia Emperor accepted the little azure sword, then said with a laugh, "Then junior apprentice-brother, I won't disturb your leisurely life in your monastery any more." After speaking, he vanished into thin air.

Chapter 38: A Friend Comes From Afar

The Conclave of Immortal Destiny had concluded.

The Skylight Palace. The various Celestial Immortals were all beginning to leave.

“It’s rare that I’m allowed out, but I have to go back now.” Empyrean God Seatopple opened his mouth, and all of the platters of delicacies on his table flew into his mouth. He then rubbed his belly, then said in satisfaction, “Xiamang, Eastflower, everyone, I’m going to take my junior apprentice-brother back now.”

And then, he pulled the Sloppy Daoist by the arm. Whoosh! He flew onto a cloud and disappeared deep into the depths of the sky.

“Time to go, apprentice,” Lu Dongbin said as he looked towards Yu Wei, who was next to Ji Ning in the distance.

Yu Wei and Ning were speaking to each other. Upon hearing Lu Dongbin urge her to leave, she couldn’t help but feel even more reluctant to part from Ning. She gave him a tight hug, and Ning held her in his arms.

He could sense Yu Wei’s heart. This was a woman with a cold exterior but a scorchingly hot heart. Upon becoming Dao-companions with her, he could sense the warmth of her heart.

“Wait for me,” Yu Wei said softly.

Ning pressed his face against Yu Wei’s, feeling the warmth of her skin. He whispered back gently, “Gotta. I swear it.”

“No need for oaths.” Yu Wei released Ning, tears appearing in her eyes. “I believe you.” And then, she turned and ran to Lu Dongbin’s side.

“Sorry for making you wait so long, Master,” Yu Wei said hurriedly.

“Silly child, silly child.” Lu Dongbin shook his head and sighed. A cloud appeared beneath their feet, and they too quickly flew into the skies and disappeared.

Ning raised his head to watch.

Atop the cloud, Yu Wei lowered her head to look at him.

Their gazes met...but soon afterwards, the cloud completely disappeared.

After this departure...they had no idea how long it would be before they met again.

“Senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei and Ji Ning...they are very suited to each other.” Ninelotus looked at Ning and Yu Wei, at the looks in their eyes as they parted. Their gazes were filled with longing and a reluctance to part. “The feelings between them are deeper than the feelings between myself and Ji Ning had been. My heart and Ji Ning’s heart...they were never so close.”

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“Let’s go.”

“We should leave as well.”

Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, the Immortal Elder of the Northlands, and the others all flew away gracefully as well.

“Junior apprentice-brother Woodpass, come with me to meet Master.” The Xia Emperor left alongside Adept Woodpass.

Instantly, the nearly thousand Celestial Immortals present all began to depart as well. Ji Ning and Yuchi Xiyue departed alongside King Yan, while Ninelotus left alongside the Dongyan Forefather.

Per King Qi’s command, the delegations from the 3600 commanderies and Four Seas began to leave in an orderly fashion. As for Ji Ning, he flew back to return to the Stillwater Commandery’s delegation.

“Ji Ning.”

“Ji Ning! The champion of the Conclave!”

“Adept Darknorth!” The delegates of Stillwater Commandery saw Ji Ning fly down from the skies. Instantly, they began to call out in

celebration.

They didn't know about the matter of the Daofather accepting a disciple. All they knew was that Ji Ning was the champion of this entire Conclave! This was an incomparable glory, a proud moment for the entire Stillwater Commandery.

"Master." Little Qing transformed into a streak of light that flew towards Ning, then wrapped herself around Ning's arm.

"Ning, child." The Whitewater Hound flew to Ning's side as well.

"Little Qing. Uncle White." Ji Ning was feeling rather miserable due to Yu Wei's temporary departure. He immediately felt much better; at least Little Qing and Uncle White would continue to accompany him.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you are too awesome." Mu Northson called out excitedly, "The champion of the Conclave. The champion! The entire world of the Grand Xia has 3600 commanderies, as well as countless islands in the Four Seas. You've only trained for thirty years, but you actually seized the championship. You are too awesome. The person I admire most in the world is you, senior apprentice-brother!"

"Congratulations, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning," Adept Vastriver said as he and others came over as well.

"Ji Ning." Northmont Baiwei walked over as well, delight on his face. He pounded Ji Ning on the chest. "What a fellow. When you first said you were participating in the Conclave, I actually tried to stop you. It seems I underestimated you! You are so formidable that you actually were able to become the champion of this Conclave. You are now a truly major figure in our Stillwater Commandery; in fact, your name will be ringing throughout the entire Grand Xia Dynasty."

Ning could only laugh.

If this Conclave of Immortal Destiny had only been an ordinary one, then he would indeed feel quite delighted. But the most important part of this Conclave had been the Daofather's choice of a disciple. As for the empty title of 'champion', it wasn't that important. Sadly...he wasn't able

to be apprenticed to the Daofather.

“Ji Ning, our Black-White College has really gained a lot of face this time,” Immortal Fivecraze said in a gratified manner. “Both you and little Sloppy entered the top six, and you even became champion. Haha...our Black-White College has to memorialize this occasion. Even after a million years, even after a hundred million years...so long as our Black-White College still exists, we’ll make sure that those who come after us know of this matter. This is the pride of our Black-White College!”

“Where is eldest apprentice-brother?”

“Where is senior apprentice-brother Sloppy?”

“And senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei, where is senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei?” One question after another.

Ning sent mentally to Immortal Fivecraze, “Eldest apprentice-brother was accepted as a disciple by a Daofather, Grand Emperor Xuanwu, while Yu Wei was accepted as a disciple by a Pure Yang True Immortal, Lu Dongbin. They have all been taken away from this major world.”

“What...” Immortal Fivecraze was greatly shocked.

Grand Emperor Xuanwu?

Lu Dongbin?

Fivecraze was the longest living Loose Immortal the Black-White College currently had. He had met Celestial Immortals before, and had a vague understanding of the Three Realms. He knew what it meant for a person to become a Daofather’s disciple. Lu Dongbin accepting Yu Wei as a disciple was also an earth-shaking matter for the Black-White College.

“Understood. Don’t let anyone learn of this,” Immortal Fivecraze said.

“Right.” Ning nodded.

“And you?” Immortal Fivecraze sent mentally.

“I should be arranged to be apprenticed to a Pure Yang True Immortal,” Ning sent. “The Xia Emperor told me to spend three days in the imperial capital to await word.”

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Upon the conclusion of this Conclave, the various Celestial Immortals all departed. A long time later.

Whoooosh. In the air above the imperial capital. Deep within the void. A tunnel was ripped in space.

A white-robed youth with long, unbound hair leisurely strolled out from this corridor. He stared downwards, his gaze passing through space and seeing the vast imperial capital of the Grand Xia before him.

“Grand Xia?” The white-robed youth nodded gently. He quickly moved through the void, descending into the imperial capital.

He walked forward in a very relaxed manner. A short time later, he arrived outside King Yan’s Estate.

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“Junior apprentice-brother.” Outside King Yan’s Estate, Ning gave Northson a hug, then separated. “Both myself and your senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei will be apprenticed to a Pure Yang True Immortal. Once the Xia Emperor’s notification comes, I trust that I will soon follow the True Immortal to leave this major world of the Grand Xia. After this departure, it may be decades or a century before I return. It will be many years before we two brothers shall meet again.”

Of his fellow disciples, Ning had the closest relationship with Northson. They were true, lifelong brothers.

“Senior apprentice-brother, you are following a Pure Yang True Immortal in order to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal. This is a good thing.” Northson’s eyes were turning slightly red. “However...I really can’t bear to part from you, senior apprentice-brother.”

“Hahaha, we two brothers will still meet again,” Ning said.

“Although you will be following a Pure Yang True Immortal, don’t get too cocky. I, Mu Northson, will also train hard. If you get lazy, upon your

return, our big Champion of the Conclave might end up be weaker than me, Mu Northson. Ahaha, that would be a huge joke,” Northson laughed.

Ning laughed as well.

“Alright, no need to send me off! When you return to the world of the Grand Xia, come find me,” Northson said.

“Definitely. I’ll definitely seek you out.” Ning nodded.

“Right.” Northson turned and left, riding an azure dragon and soaring into the skies. The other disciples had bid farewell to Ning long ago, after they left the imperial citadel. Only Northson, who was closest to Ning, had escorted Ning all the way to King Yan’s Estate.

Ning watched him fly away atop the azure dragon. He watched for a long moment, then turned and led Little Qing and the Whitewater Hound into King Yan’s Estate.

“Hm!” The white-robed youth who had been quietly watching from afar shook his head. “It seems this Ji Ning is a fellow who cares quite a bit about relationships. Not bad, no bad.” As he spoke, he leisurely sauntered towards King Yan’s Estate.

King Yan’s Estate had many guards watching the gate, but when the white-robed youth leisurely sauntered through it, none of them seemed to notice a thing.

“The restrictive spells covering King Yan’s Estate have a bit of power behind them. This new Celestial Immortal, King Yan...he’s not too shabby.” As the white-robed youth walked forward, he encountered quite a few maids and soldiers on his path. None of them, however, noticed a thing. It was as though he was invisible, as though he didn’t exist.

The royal estate was very tightly guarded, and it was protected by restrictive spells. It was no weaker than any major sect. Logically speaking, as soon as someone entered, the master of this royal estate, King Yan, would have immediately noticed.

But the white-robed youth walked in without a single person noticing him!

Rustle...

By the side of a creek, there was an Immortal estate. This was the place where Ning was living.

“Ji Ning is just a Wanxiang Adept, but he’s not doing too bad for himself.” The white-robed youth walked to the door of the Immortal estate, then entered it. Not a single one of the spells covering the Immortal estate activated.

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Within the Immortal estate. Ning, who had just returned to the estate, quietly sat down within a pavilion. Yu Wei had already left along with her master, Lu Dongbin. This caused Ning to feel a melancholy feeling in his heart.

“Ji Ning, someone entered. Someone entered your Immortal estate.” The giant yellow bear’s voice rang out in Ning’s mind.

“Entered my Immortal estate? I’m the master of this Immortal estate; how could I not have noticed?” Ning’s face changed.

“He’s very powerful. Even I can only vaguely sense him; I don’t dare to really go test him,” the giant yellow bear said urgently. “This person is very powerful; he should be on the level of a True Immortal or an Empyrean God. Your Immortal estate is merely an ordinary residence-type magic treasure, and the door to your estate was open. How could you possibly notice someone like him?”

Ning was shocked. A True Immortal or an Empyrean God? This was someone comparable to the Grand Xia Emperor. They were quite rare in the Three Realms, and were very powerful.

“You became the champion of the Conclave, but not only do you not celebrate with friends, you actually sit here by yourself, drinking wine unhappily? Strange, quite strange.” An airy voice rang out, and a white-robed, long-haired youth strolled forward into the spacious courtyard.

Within the courtyard, Ning hurriedly rose to his feet.

“A friend has come from afar; is this not a wonderful affair?” The white-robed youth said with a smile, “Young friend Ji Ning, I’ve made quite a long and arduous journey to come to your place. Aren’t you going to at least invite me to have a cup of wine?”

“Senior, please do!”

Ning waved his arm, and the table before him became filled with Immortal nectar and spirit-fruit.

“Although the wine and the fruit are a bit lacking, I suppose they are edible.” The white-robed youth took a step forward and sat down in front of Ning. Picking up a gourd of wine, he took two sips.

“Senior, might I ask why you have come to see me?” Ning asked nervously.

Chapter 39: The Most Mysterious Daofather

The white-robed youth laughed as he spoke. “Young friend Ji Ning, you are a bit too nervous. You don’t even know who I am, but you are asking me what I’m doing here. Aren’t you being a bit too impatient?”

Ning muttered to himself. Nervous? A Pure Yang True Immortal had just sat down in front of him. How could he not be nervous? After this Conclave, Ning had come to understand quite well that unless a True Immortal or an Empyrean God had taken a fancy to you, they wouldn’t pay you any heed, even if you were a so-called genius. After all, there were far too many ‘geniuses’, but how many would be able to overcome the Celestial Tribulation to become a Celestial Immortal? Much less become a Pure Yang True Immortal.

“Dare I ask who you are, senior?” Ning asked.

“A carefree figure of the Three Realms, born in the era of the ancient Primordial World, where I gained my Dao. I am Lord Jiang.” The white-robed youth said with a sigh, “I rarely roam the outside world, and even when I do I rarely use my own name. Thus, there are very, very few people who know of me.”

He then winked towards Ning. “I just told you my real name.”

Ning relaxed a little bit. It seemed as though this person bore him no ill-will.

“Also, don’t address me as senior this and senior that. You can just address me as brother Jiang,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said.

Ning was startled. Brother Jiang? For a Pure Yang True Immortal to tell him to refer to him as just ‘brother’...Ning was no fool. He naturally understood the meaning hidden within these words.

“But it seems if I don’t spell things out, you won’t be able to calm down.” The white-robed Lord Jiang glanced sideways at Little Qing and the Whitewater Hound. “Have your two spirit-beasts step back for now.”

“Alright,” Ning immediately said. He had Uncle White and Little Qing temporarily leave. A Pure Yang True Immortal could crush him to death; Ning was naturally going to listen to his instructions with obedience.

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Within the courtyard, only Ji Ning and Lord Jiang were present. They were seated facing each other.

“I imagine that you have already guessed that I have come today per the orders of my master to receive you,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said with a smile. “In other words, my master wishes to take you on as a disciple, and you shall become my junior apprentice-brother.”

Ning could barely breathe. He couldn’t help but ask, “Then brother Jiang, your master is...?”

“He is naturally one of the most supreme major powers of the Three Realms, a Daofather-level figure,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said.

Ning’s eyes lit up. It was as he had thought. When this person had instructed him to refer to himself as ‘brother Jiang’, Ning had already been able to guess at what this was about. But upon hearing the full explanation, he still couldn’t help but feel that this was inconceivable.

A Daofather!

He had fought and clawed to become the champion of this Conclave, but in the end, Daofather Crimsonbright still did not choose him to be his disciple. The Sloppy Daoist, in turn, was chosen as a disciple by Grand Emperor Xuanwu. There was nothing Ning could do about these things, and he had already resigned himself to becoming the disciple of a lower-ranked Pure Yang True Immortal. But now, a Pure Yang True Immortal named Lord Jiang had appeared, saying that he represented his master!

“Ji Ning.” The giant yellow bear’s voice suddenly rang out in Ning’s mind. “Lord Jiang said that he was born in the Primordial Era, and gained his Dao in that era as well! But...I’ve never even heard of him. And he says his master is a Daofather...you need to figure out exactly which Daofather it is. Some of the Daofathers of the Three Realms were good

friends of my master, Daoist Threelives...but some of them were his mortal enemies! Don't end up becoming an apprentice to one of his mortal enemies. Given a Daofather's vision, if you learn the Dao from him, he will sooner or later see hints of the truth and discover that there is a relationship between you and Daoist Threelives. If you become apprenticed to one of his mortal enemies, then you'll be throwing yourself up for capture."

Ning instantly came to his senses. He felt as though someone had just poured a bucket of ice water over him!

"Dare I ask which Daofather it is?" Ning asked.

Lord Jiang's eyes had a look of reverence in them as he spoke.

"Master was born from the primordial chaos, and was good friends with Pangu and Nuwa."

"He became famous in the Primordial Era, and has killed many Fiendgod Daofathers."

"His name is known throughout the Three Realms, but very few have ever seen him."

"The Buddhist Sangha, the Daoist Path; he is a master of both. With but a dream, he knows of all the affairs of the Three Realms."

"He has many disciples, but very few know this."

"In terms of who is the most mysterious figure in the Three Realms...it is my master!"

The white-robed Lord Jiang nodded as he spoke.

Ning, hearing this, was stunned. "Who on earth is he?"

"Mount Innerheart 1, the Tristar Crescent Abode...Patriarch Subhuti!" 2 The white-robed Lord Jiang's eyes lit up, and he smiled as he looked at Ning.

"It's him. It's him! The Tristar Crescent Abode...the most mysterious Daofather...the most secretive Daofather! Ji Ning, you've hit the jackpot. I...ahahaha...you really hit the jackpot! Patriarch Subhuti actually knows

about you. He actually knows about your existence. How in the world does he know?!" The voice of the giant yellow bear rang out within Ning's mind. Clearly, he was incomparably excited.

"...is it really necessary for you to be so worked up?" Ning asked mentally.

"Of course! You have no idea how mighty he is! Ji Ning, let me put it to you this way...in terms of teaching disciples, Patriarch Subhuti is definitely one of the absolute most peerless figures of the Three Realms. What this Lord Jiang said earlier was absolutely correct; Patriarch Subhuti truly has produced many formidable disciples. However, Patriarch Subhuti has a rule; whenever the disciples he has taught leaves his side, unless he gives permission, they are forbidden from telling others that he is their master. Thus, even back in the Primordial Era, there were already many powerful and seemingly unaffiliated wandering Immortals who were actually under the command of Patriarch Subhuti!" 3

"Ordinary people don't know about this, but my master, Daofather Threelives, did. He knew exactly how formidable Patriarch Subhuti is." The giant yellow bear was extremely excited right now.

"Oh." Ning asked, "Why is he the most mysterious, then?"

"Right, he really is the most mysterious Daofather!" The giant yellow bear said with absolute certainty, "In the Three Realms, not even Pangu or Nuwa were as mysterious as him! In fact, to this very day, no one even knows where his estate is located. Without his permission, no one can even find his estate."

"The estates of the other major powers of the Three Realms are all findable; after all, major powers often interact with other figures of the world, and they will often invite their good friends into their estate."

"Patriarch Subhuti has taken in many disciples, and also invites his friends over to his estate. But be it disciples or friends...upon leaving his estate, they'll never be able to find it again. You must understand that all of his friends are also at the True God level. After having entered the estate once, how is it that they cannot locate it again? Isn't this

completely bizarre? Isn't this very mysterious?"

"He's that mysterious?" Ning was amazed.

Daofathers were major powers of the Three Realms who controlled a Heavenly Dao. For a Daofather to visit a place, then be unable to find it again afterwards? How bizarre!

"No one knows where his estate is. Even his disciples who have trained within the estate for many years are still unable to find it upon leaving. Unless Patriarch Subhuti nods and permits it, none of them can return." The giant yellow bear sighed emotionally. "In the past, my master Daoist Threelives once said...in the entire Primordial World, of all the major powers, Maiden Nuwa would be ranked number one in terms of survival abilities, but right after her was the legendarily mysterious Patriarch Subhuti."

"Patriarch Subhuti. He's so secretive that other major powers can't even find his estate. You tell me; how formidable are his survival skills?" The giant yellow bear sighed, "If Master had Patriarch Subhuti's survival skills, he would definitely still be alive to this very day."

Ning was speechless as he heard these things. This was an absolute bizarro amongst the major powers of the Three Realms. No one could even find his estate, and his survival abilities were second only to Maiden Nuwa.

"Patriarch Subhuti trains in both Buddhism and Daoism. ⁴ With a single dream, he learns of all the matters of the Three Realms. His power is simply unfathomable. This Lord Jiang said earlier that Patriarch Subhuti has slaughtered many Fiendgod Daofathers. Although I don't know much about this, it should be true. There should have been Daofathers and True Gods who had fallen to him, and not just one," the giant yellow bear said.

"What a formidable figure." Ji Ning felt stunned.

"Most importantly of all, your master Daoist Threelives and Patriarch Subhuti were true lifelong friends who went through life and death together!" The giant yellow bear was extremely excited. "They were true

lifelong friends! The relationship between Master and him was even closer than the relationship Master had with Daofather Crimsonbright. When Master forged this underwater estate, he even asked Patriarch Subhuti to come help out!"

"Ah?!" Ning now understood exactly how close the relationship between Daoist Threelives and Patriarch Subhuti was.

"Given Patriarch Subhuti's status, he definitely won't harm you at all," the giant yellow bear said.

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Ji Ning was mentally speaking with the giant yellow bear. Gradually, traces of unbearable excitement and astonishment appeared on his face.

The white-robed Lord Jiang laughed as he watched. "My master learns of the matters of the Three Realms in a single dream. In his dream, he saw the Conclave in your world of the Grand Xia. It was as though he watched in person. During this Conclave, Master took no interest in anyone else; just you."

"He watched personally?" Ning instantly understood. Perhaps True Immortals and Empyrean Gods would find it hard to discover his [Starseizing Hand], but greater powers could, especially one who was such an incredibly good friend with Daoist Threelives.

"In addition, Master instructed me to deliver a message. He told me to say: 'Little yellow-furred bear, how have you been?'" Lord Jiang continued, "He said that after I delivered this message, you would agree to leave with me."

Ning's pulse began to speed up. Little yellow-furred bear? He was speaking of the spirit of the underwater estate!

"Ji Ning, Patriarch Subhuti must have discovered your [Starseizing Hand] through his 'Dream of the Three Realms'. He must have guessed that you are Master's heir. That's why he personally ordered someone to receive you." The giant yellow bear's voice was filled with excitement. "Hurry, hurry and go! So long as you go to Patriarch Subhuti, we can learn

about what has happened to Master.”

The spirit of the underwater estate...he truly wanted to know if his master was alive or dead.

.....

As Ning and the white-robed Lord Jiang were chatting, King Qi had arrived at King Yan’s estate.

“This Conclave of Immortal Destiny has concluded. Why have you come to my place?” King Yan said with a laugh.

“Because of Ji Ning, of course,” King Qi laughed as well. “His Imperial Majesty personally went to visit uncle-master Evergreen. You know what sort of a temper he has; he doesn’t like to teach students, and is an extremely solitary person. Still...since this was the Daofather’s order, uncle-master Evergreen nodded and agreed to accept Ji Ning as his disciple.”

“Oh. Uncle-master Evergreen is a Sword Immortal, while Ning was born to be a Sword Immortal. He is quite suited for teaching Ji Ning. However, I’m just worried that uncle-master Evergreen...” King Yan was rather worried.

“That’s not for you to worry about.” King Qi shook his head. “I’m here on his Imperial Majesty’s orders to give uncle-master Evergreen’s talisman to Ji Ning.”

“It seems as though Ji Ning really is going to become uncle-master Evergreen’s disciple,” King Yan said.

Because of his granddaughter, King Yan had actually been hoping for Ji Ning to be apprenticed to a better teacher. However...of the Pure Yang True Immortals under Daofather Crimsonbright’s command, the only Sword Immortal was Sword Immortal Evergreen.

The two chatted and laughed as they walked to Ning’s Immortal estate.

“Ji Ning,” King Yan called out.

1. In Chinese, this was 'fangcun', which literally means a square inch, but metaphorically refers to the workings of a person's inner heart.
2. Subhuti is not only a famous disciple of Gautama Buddha in real history, he is also extremely famous as being the teacher of Sun Wukong, the person who taught Sun Wukong Daoist magic and his legendary 72 Transformations.
3. This is a play off what happened in Journey to the West. When Sun Wukong left Subhuti's tutelage, Subhuti ordered him not to tell anyone that he had been Sun Wukong's master; he knew how unruly this monkey was and was afraid he would lose face/be implicated if others realized that he was the one who had taught Sun Wukong.
4. This historical Subhuti was a Buddhist figure. Because he taught Sun Wukong Daoist magic in Journey to the West, he is often conflated as both a Buddhist and Daoist figure.

Chapter 40: A Swift Departure

At the entrance to Ning's Immortal estate.

Ning came out to the entrance to greet them. Upon seeing the two, he immediately said with respect, "Greetings, King Yan, King Qi."

"Ji Ning, good news has arrived," King Yan said with a laugh.

"Oh?" Ning was startled. Good news? Could it be that the Grand Xia Emperor had found a Pure Yang True Immortal to be his master?

The nearby King Qi said with a laugh, "His Imperial Majesty has sought out his junior apprentice-brother, Sword Immortal Evergreen. Sword Immortal Evergreen is a Pure Yang True Immortal. He is very powerful, and has thoroughly mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword. He is quite a famous Sword Immortal in the Three Realms...he is quite suited for teaching you."

Ning nodded gently. Sword Immortal Evergreen?

"Ji Ning," King Yan said in a lowered voice, "This Sword Immortal Evergreen is rather arrogant and aloof. You need to be careful around him and be very respectful."

Ning's heart twitched. To respect one's master was only proper; that didn't need to be said. But for King Yan, as a Celestial Immortal, to describe a Pure Yang True Immortal like Sword Immortal Evergreen as arrogant and aloof, then tell him to be very respectful...Ning thought to himself, "I imagine this Sword Immortal Evergreen isn't merely 'aloof' and 'arrogant'. Luckily, I don't need to take him on as my master at all."

"Don't say so many things," the nearby King Qi frowned.

King Yan laughed, saying nothing else.

"Ji Ning." King Qi waved his hand, and a little azure sword appeared within it. "This is Sword Immortal Evergreen's talisman. I'll hand it to you now. All you need to do is crush it, and Sword Immortal Evergreen will come find you and take you away! Remember - you have to crush it within ten days. After ten days, the talisman will automatically

disintegrate. By then, given Sword Immortal Evergreen's temper, he probably won't take you on as a disciple."

Ning immediately accepted the talisman. "I understand."

"The talisman is in your hands now. I'm going to leave now." King Qi smiled towards Ning, then turned and left.

King Yan whispered softly, "Sword Immortal Evergreen has a rather bad temper. You have to remember this. Also, before you leave with your master, let Xiyue know. You don't need to inform me of it. I'll pray that when you leave, you'll be able to learn some real abilities, and that you shall overcome your Celestial Tribulation in the future and become a carefree and unbound Immortal."

Ning could feel King Yan's caring towards him. "Thank you, King Yan. Ji Ning will remember it."

"Good." King Yan immediately left.

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Just moments later.

Yuchi Xiyue arrived at Ning's estate.

"Cousin." Ning didn't want to part with her either. He truly was about to leave, but it wasn't with Sword Immortal Evergreen; rather, it would be to meet the most mysterious major power of the Three Realms, Patriarch Subhuti. After this departure, it would probably be decades or a century before he could return.

"Little brother." Xiyue sat down, then took Ning by the hand. Her eyes were filled with tears...but they were tears of joy. "The two of us were together for two or three years, but it is now time to part. However...don't feel unhappy. This is your chance, your chance to soar into the heavens. Although you weren't able to become a Daofather's disciple, it's still quite good for you to become a Pure Yang True Immortal's disciple."

Ning truly wanted to tell his cousin that he was taking on Patriarch Subhuti as master.

However...

When he had gone to greet King Yan and King Qi, Lord Jiang had instructed him, “Remember, no matter what you cannot tell them of this. Upon Xiamang Xun learning of this, he will move to obstruct it. He might even pull in Daofather Crimsonbright, who stands behind him. That will make things troublesome.”

“Cousin, after I leave the world of the Grand Xia, you need to take good care of himself,” Ning said. “Don’t let yourself suffer because of your hatred for the Youngflame clan. In the future, I will overcome my tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal. By then, dealing with the Youngflame clan will be much easier.”

“Right, right.” Xiyue nodded. “I get it. I get it.”

The two chatted for a long period of time. Xiyue only left when the sky was completely dark.

Within the Immortal estate.

“Brother Jiang, what should I do with this talisman of Sword Immortal Evergreen?” Ning pulled out the little azure sword. “If I crush it, Sword Immortal Evergreen will come take me away. If I don’t crush it, it will dissipate naturally.”

“Give it to me,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said with a laugh. He stretched his hand out, and the little azure sword flew into it.

“This world of the Grand Xia is part of the territory of Daofather Crimsonbright, after all.” Lord Jiang said with a laugh, “We can’t be too brash here. Fortunately...when a Pure Yang True Immortal takes on a disciple, the disciple has to be willing. If you don’t crush it within ten days, then Sword Immortal Evergreen will assume that you weren’t willing to accept him as your master...and they will have no idea that you’ve actually taken on Patriarch Subhuti as your master. They will probably think that you are adventuring in the outside world. Even if you reveal hints of it upon returning once you are powerful, causing someone to learn that you are Patriarch Subhuti’s disciple, so what? In the Three Realms, my master has quite a bit of face.”

Ning nodded. "Then my two spirit-beasts?"

"You can bring your spirit-beasts into the Tristar Crescent Abode," the white-robed Lord Jun said. "However, they cannot take on Master as their teacher."

"As long as I can bring them." Ning nodded repeatedly in delight.

"If there's nothing else, we can head out right now," the white-robed Lord Jiang said.

"Right." Ning nodded, them immediately called out, "Uncle White, Little Qing."

The distant Little Qing flew over with a swoosh, wrapping herself around Ning's arm. Uncle White arrived by Ning's side as well.

"Uncle White, Little Qing, we are preparing to leave the world of the Grand Xia," Ning said.

"Leave the world of the Grand Xia?" The two of them were both amazed. Leave this world? "To where?" Little Qing asked.

Ning turned to ask, "Brother Jiang, where is the Tristar Crescent Abode?"

"The Tristar Crescent Abode...it consists of a crescent hook and three stars. Tell me, what character is this?" The white-robed Lord Jiang said with a smile.

"A crescent hook and three stars? The character for heart '心'?" Ning instantly understood.

"Right. The character 'heart'. The Tristar Crescent Abode is Master's estate. The Three Realms is vast, but no one can find the location of Master's estate. This place is a place where one can only go through the heart, a place you find with your heart," the white-robed Lord Jiang said.

Ning instantly felt that this was incomparably mysterious. A crescent hook and three stars? This was indeed the character 'heart' 心. This name which Patriarch Subhuti gave his cavern estate was quite interesting.

"Patriarch Subhuti, the Tristar Crescent Abode..." Ning began to think

back to one of the mythological fantasy novels he had read in his world, [Journey to the West]. [Journey to the West] was a novel written by ancient individuals, and it included Pangu, Nuwa, Patriarch Subhuti, and others. However, there was no mention of the three thousand major worlds or trillion minor worlds.

Ning had gone to the Netherworld Kingdom and been reincarnated before learning a few things about the Three Realms.

Ning now understood that every single world shared some legends, especially those regarding formidable figures such as Pangu, Nuwa, Houyi, and Kuafu, were discussed by countless people of the Three Realms. Novels like [Journey to the West] were influenced by even more ancient legends; for example, the legends of Pangu establishing the heavens or Nuwa creating humanity didn't come from [Journey to the West].

Actually, in the world of the Grand Xia as well, there were some novels and literature regarding various Gods and Immortals; these novels even recorded down tales involving divine abilities such as [Heavenly Transformations] or the [Torch Dragon's Eye], which compiled into various stories. Some of these stories were real while others were false. Some even got the names wrong!

Perhaps in the ancient days on Earth, there were actual Immortal cultivators. In fact, some humans on Earth might have been reincarnated Immortals who had awoken their previous memories, and so had left behind certain legends to the world.

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"The Three Realms has countless legends, and many of them have been compiled into novels. However...the true secrets of the Three Realms remain unclear to me, even though I have slaughtered Loose Immortals and received the legacy of Daoist Threelives." Ning sighed to himself, "Why was the previous Primordial World destroyed and transformed into the three thousand major worlds and trillion minor worlds? Who on earth attacked the Six Paths of Reincarnation?"

These were mysteries!

“The Tristar Crescent Abode is an estate of one of the major powers of the Three Realms, and the most mysterious one at that. Although I’ve always remained within the Tristar Crescent Abode, I don’t actually know where it is. I have to have Master guide me into it in order to return.” The white-robed Lord Jiang said with a sigh, “Let’s go. Pick up your Immortal estate.”

“Right.” Ning willed it. Instantly, the Immortal estate was collected. Ning stood there on the grass next to the river, Little Qing around his arm and the Whitewater Hound by his side. The white-robed Lord Jiang said, “This journey will last decades or even longer. Is there anything you need to do?”

Ning shook his head gently. There was nothing.

The reason he had left Stillwater Commandery was because of the Youngflame clan’s pursuit. He had told Autumn Leaf and the leaders of the Ji clan that he would be leaving for a very long period of time! Yu Wei had already been taken away by Lu Dongbin to train in the Dao, while he had already told his cousin, Yuchi Xiyue, of his departure. He had also bade farewell to his fellow disciples of the Black-White College.”

“Then let us go.” The white-robed Lord Jiang willed a cloud to appear beneath their feet. The cloud floated upwards, carrying Lord Jiang, Ji Ning, and the Whitewater Hound to quickly soar into the skies, completely bypassing the restrictive spells as they flew deep into the void.

Soon, they reached the very highest parts of the sky.

Riiiiip. Lord Jiang waved his hands. The dim, twisting void above them was instantly torn apart, and a corridor emerged. Within the corridor, one could vaguely see twisted, distorted rainbow light.

“Let’s go.” The white-robed lord Jiang gave the little azure sword a toss, and it fell down many tens of thousands of kilometers towards the ground. He then led Ji Ning, Little Qing, and the Whitewater Hound into the spatial tunnel.

Whoosh.

The spatial tunnel quickly closed. Everything was back to normal.

Within the world of the Grand Xia...there was no longer a Ji Ning to be found.

Twelve days passed after the conclusion of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny.

The Xia Emperor was within a side hall of the Skylight Palace, seated in the lotus position with eyes closed.

“Eh?” The Xia Emperor suddenly opened his eyes, revealing a confused look. “Why has junior apprentice-brother Evergreen come?”

Soon, a young man walked into the side hall. The servants and guards present didn’t seem to see him at all.

“Senior apprentice-brother,” Sword Immortal Evergreen said.

“Junior apprentice-brother, why have you come to my place?” The Xia Emperor asked, puzzled.

“This is the twelfth day. The talisman I gave you has long since dissipated.” Sword Immortal Evergreen shook his head. “Normally, I couldn’t be bothered to come; after all, Ji Ning didn’t crush the talisman, and so I couldn’t be bothered to take him as my disciple. But since this was Master’s instruction...I came to make a trip to this world of the Grand Xia. If Ji Ning is willing, I’ll give him another chance to be my disciple.”

“What did you say?!?” The Xia Emperor was shocked. “Ji Ning didn’t crush the talisman?”

“Right. He didn’t crush it.” Sword Immortal Evergreen shook his head.

“But Ji Ning left King Yan’s estate long ago. I thought that you had taken him away. I thought that because of how arrogant and aloof you are, you simply didn’t inform me.” The Xia Emperor was flabbergasted. “I even did an investigation; he’s no longer in the imperial capital of the Grand Xia. Lu Dongbin, Mahasthamaprapta...they wouldn’t go so far as to

offend the Daofather for the sake of this little fellow, right? Can it be that Ji Ning is just too young? He became the champion of the Conclave, but wasn't able to become the Daofather's apprentice, and so in his anger he decided not to accept a Pure Yang True Immortal as his master and instead left by himself?"

Sword Immortal Evergreen snorted coldly. "Oh? You say he left the imperial capital long ago? If that's the case, then senior apprentice-brother, I've already done all I can. This matter no longer has anything to do with me."

After speaking, Sword Immortal Evergreen turned and departed, quickly leaving this major world.

He really didn't care about Ji Ning at all. He had only made a trip here because of his master's instructions.

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